

**Epi Update for Friday, December 18, 2015**  
**Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)**  
**Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)**

**Items for this week's Epi Update include:**

- **Carbon monoxide poisoning**
- **Home electronics recycling dangers**
- **Iowa Acute Disease Monthly Update**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

**Carbon monoxide poisoning**

Despite the “balmy” December in Iowa this year, the home heating season is in full swing, along with an increased risk for carbon monoxide (CO) exposure. This odorless, tasteless and colorless gas can be emitted from poorly functioning or unvented furnaces or other gas-powered home appliances.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, carbon monoxide is the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in the United States, with nearly half of all accidental carbon monoxide deaths occurring during the winter. Unintentional CO exposure also accounts for an estimated 15,000 emergency department visits in the United States each year. The most common symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and altered mental status. Symptoms of severe CO poisoning include malaise, shortness of breath, headache, nausea, chest pain, irritability, ataxia, altered mental status, other neurologic symptoms, loss of consciousness, coma, and death. Signs include tachycardia, tachypnea, hypotension, various neurologic findings including impaired memory, cognitive and sensory disturbances.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is reportable to the Iowa Department of Public Health if there is a blood-carbon monoxide level equal to or greater than 10 percent carboxyhemoglobin or its equivalent in a breath analyzer test, or a clinical diagnosis regardless of any test results. CO poisoning can be reported via the Iowa Disease Surveillance System (IDSS) or by fax to 515-281-4529.

The Iowa Statewide Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222) offers 24/7 consultation to the public and health care providers on CO treatment and forwards reports of CO exposures and poisonings to IDPH.

**Home electronics recycling dangers**

In a recent article, Iowa reported a serious mercury poisoning case that resulted from at-home gold and silver smelting (from recycled computer parts). To review the report, visit [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6449a4.htm?s\\_cid=mm6449a4\\_e](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6449a4.htm?s_cid=mm6449a4_e).

Attempts to recycle precious metals from electronics by those lacking proper training, equipment, and facilities can result in serious illness from chemical exposure. Smelting can also contaminate a home and require professional mitigation.

Clinicians should consider mercury poisoning in patients with a history of smelting or use of heavy metals during hobby activities or in the workplace. Mercury poisoning is a reportable condition in Iowa. Additional information regarding mercury poisoning and reporting can be found at [idph.iowa.gov/ehs/reportable-diseases](http://idph.iowa.gov/ehs/reportable-diseases).

### **Iowa Acute Disease Monthly Update**

The new issue of the Iowa Acute Disease Monthly Update is available on our new website. Visit [idph.iowa.gov/CADE](http://idph.iowa.gov/CADE) and scroll down to 'Reports' or access the report directly with the following [idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/userfiles/79/Reports/Misc/IADMU%20Dec%202015.pdf](http://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/userfiles/79/Reports/Misc/IADMU%20Dec%202015.pdf).

### **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

None

### **Have a healthy and happy week!**

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