

EPI Update for Friday, Dec. 8, 2006
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Current outbreaks in Iowa**
- **Norovirus activity in Iowa**
- **Most kids don't get follow-up flu vaccine**
- **Hand hygiene reminders**
- **Greetings from the new deputy state epidemiologist**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Current outbreaks in Iowa

There are several outbreaks and situations of public health importance occurring now in Iowa; we will update you on them next week when we know more. Meanwhile, if emergency information is required, we will notify you immediately via the Iowa Health Alert Network (HAN) and/or special editions of the *EPI Update*.

Norovirus activity in Iowa

Nearly 1,000 Iowans have gotten ill in the last several weeks due to a group of viruses called norovirus. At least seven outbreaks have occurred in a wide variety of settings such as business functions, long-term, care facilities, restaurants, schools, social receptions, and a gaming facility. The outbreaks have no common links; however noroviruses are usually spread by people failing to wash their hands after going to the bathroom and before preparing food, as well as working in food preparation while ill with vomiting and diarrhea. While norovirus outbreaks can occur throughout the year, it is unusual to see this number of them in a short period of time, prompting concerns that more disease will spread in the holiday season.

Noroviruses are a major cause of gastrointestinal illnesses each year. They are generally characterized by nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and low-grade fever. While some have mistakenly described this as the "stomach flu," noroviruses are not the same as influenza. (Remember, influenza will always cause respiratory symptoms, whereas noroviruses do not.) The illness lasts for a few days and victims usually recover completely with no long-term health effects. If ill, the most important thing to do is to keep drinking fluids as the most common cause of hospitalization with norovirus infection is dehydration.

Anyone with diarrhea or vomiting in the last few days should not be handling any food items. That rule is important no matter if you're cooking for 2 or 200, whether it's a regular family meal or holiday gathering or at a restaurant. After the diarrhea resolves, wait until normal formed stools are produced before handling food again.

In the midst of the holiday cooking season, IDPH urges Iowans to remember basic good food handling practices and hand washing so that the holiday meal will be memorable for the right reasons.

Most kids don't get follow-up flu vaccine

Children younger than 9 years, who are receiving their influenza immunization for the first time, should receive two doses, with the doses separated by at least one month. In the November 2006 issue of *Pediatrics* journal, a study reports on the success rate of young children returning for their second influenza immunization.

In three years of study, among children 6–23 months of age, the proportion of first-vaccinated children who received a second vaccination was less than 55 percent. Children from 2 to 8 years of age fared worse, with less than 25 percent receiving their second dose.

The recommendation for universal vaccination of children 6 to 59 months of age and their household contacts substantially increases the number of children targeted for a first influenza vaccination. Not receiving the second dose may be associated with less than optimal protection against influenza.

For more information go to

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/gca?gca=118%2F5%2F2032&submit.x=109&submit.y=12>.

Hand hygiene reminders

With the recent increase of norovirus, influenza and other infectious disease outbreaks in Iowa in the past few weeks, “hand hygiene” is worth revisiting. However, remember that hand gels may NOT work against some micro-organisms, such as noroviruses. When in doubt, wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 15 seconds.

CDC recommends the use of both handwashing and alcohol-based handrubs by health care personnel. Alcohol-based handrubs address some of the obstacles that health care professionals face when taking care of patients. However, when hands are visibly soiled, you must wash with soap and water. The use of gloves does not eliminate the need for hand hygiene. Likewise, the use of hand hygiene does not eliminate the need for gloves. Gloves reduce hand contamination by 70 to 80 percent, prevent cross-contamination and protect patients and health care personnel from infection. Handrubs should be used before and after each patient, just as gloves should be changed before and after each patient.

For more information on hand hygiene, visit

www.cdc.gov/od/oc/media/pressrel/fs021025.htm.

Greetings from the new deputy state epidemiologist

I am Kenneth Soyemi but I prefer to be called Kenneth or Ken. I started as the deputy state epidemiologist / medical director in the Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology at IDPH on Friday, December 1. My background is in pediatrics. I trained at the Cook County Hospital in Chicago and at the Palm Beach County Health Department in Florida. I was the assistant director in the Office of Epidemiology and Disease Control at the Miami Dade County Health Department in Florida prior to joining IDPH. I look forward to working here in Iowa. Below is my address and phone number. Please feel free to contact me if I can assist you in any way.

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Meeting announcements and training opportunities

Antibiotic Resistance Grand Rounds

“Update on Community Acquired/Associated Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)”, on **Dec. 13, Noon – 1:00p.m.**

Presented by Loreen Herwaldt, MD, Steven B. Rinderknecht, DO, and Lisa Veach, MD.

Objectives are to:

- 1) Define community-acquired MRSA, the community-associated MRSA phenotype and the community-associated MRSA genotype;
- 2) Describe situations in which USA300 has spread in the health care setting;
- 3) Recognize the common clinical presentations for community-acquired MRSA; and
- 4) Understand the treatment options in the outpatient setting.

This is a free teleconference for all health care providers. A call-in telephone number and an e-mail or fax copy of the slides will be provided to you following receipt of your registration form. The registration form is available at

http://www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/common/pdf/cade/grandround_2006_registration.pdf .

A flyer for posting can be found at

www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/common/pdf/cade/grandround_2006_flyer.pdf

Have a healthy and happy week!
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
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