

**EPI Update for Friday, January 19, 2007  
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology  
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)**

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

- **Tips for influenza and respiratory illness containment in school outbreaks**
- **Extreme cold: a prevention guide to promote your personal health and safety**
- ***E. coli* 0157:H7 outbreak update**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**
  - Cancer survivors sought to share opinions on quality of life issues

**Tips for influenza and respiratory illness containment in school outbreaks**

School absence rates are increasing across the state, as are the number of influenza-associated outbreaks. Once rates of absence reach 10 percent, an outbreak may be occurring, and the public health department should be contacted. (Some schools have reached over 25 percent of students absent on a single day due to influenza.) The following are key intervention measures for schools to stop transmission and potentially contain outbreaks of influenza and other respiratory diseases:

- Work with the local public health agency (LPHA) to decrease transmission of these viruses and possibly decrease the school's outbreak impact on the community at large.
- Conduct thorough environmental cleaning daily. Include stair hand rails, doorknobs and other commonly touched surfaces.
- Send an informative letter home to parents as early in the outbreak as possible. Be sure to include the following items:
  - symptoms of influenza, to recognize when a child has the flu
  - if a child has the flu, they should stay home, and
  - get vaccinated each year, especially children with health problems like asthma.
- Teach and encourage children and staff to wash hands regularly with warm water and soap.
- Consider the use of hand sanitizer in the classroom when soap and water are not readily available.
- Limit assemblies, large group gatherings and interactions with other schools during a flu outbreak.
- Consider holding influenza vaccination clinics. This is best done before outbreaks occur. Once an outbreak is occurring, vaccination of children can help in controlling the outbreak. Target more than the affected school to yield the best results. Work with LPHA to determine feasibility and logistics.

- Use the resources at the State Health Department. Visit the influenza Web site at [www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/flu\\_childcare.asp](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/flu_childcare.asp) for fact sheets, student activities and more.

Schools: Please contact Meghan Harris [mharris@idph.state.ia.us](mailto:mharris@idph.state.ia.us) or 515-281-7134 every day your school absence rate (due to illness) exceeds 10 percent.

### **Extreme cold: a prevention guide to promote your personal health & safety**

When winter temperatures drop significantly below normal, staying warm and safe can become a challenge. Exposure to cold temperatures, can cause serious or life-threatening health problems. Infants and the elderly are particularly at risk, but anyone can be affected. To keep yourself and your family safe, you should know how to prevent cold-related health problems and what to do if a cold-weather health emergency arises. For more information, please visit: [www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/guide.asp](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/guide.asp).

### ***E. coli* 0157:H7 outbreak update**

On January 12, 2007, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released additional information on the food “trace back” of the lettuce (that Iowa public health officials implicated as the cause of the *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreak that occurred in December). FDA identified a DNA- match to the strain of *E. coli* O157:H7 bacteria associated with the outbreak from two environmental samples gathered from dairy farms near a lettuce growing area in California's Central Valley. Their investigation is still ongoing to determine if and how material from the dairy farms may have contaminated the lettuce growing area.

During the implicated time period the local health department interviewed more than 100 patrons who had eaten at the restaurant. In Iowa, 47 *E. coli* O157:H7 cases were identified, 15 of which were hospitalized and two cases developed kidney failure.

## **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

### **Cancer survivors sought to share opinions on quality of life issues**

More than half of the Iowans diagnosed with cancer survive. To better understand cancer survivorship issues, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) is hosting a forum for cancer survivors to share opinions and make an impact on the quality of life for other survivors.

IDPH's Comprehensive Cancer Control program invites Iowa's cancer survivors to attend "Iowans Living Beyond Cancer: Thriving Through Survivorship" on Thursday, January 25, 2007 from 3:00-4:30 p.m. Eleven Iowa Communications Network (ICN) locations will host the forum:

- Council Bluffs: Iowa Western Community College, 2700 College Rd., Looft Hall, #024

- Creston: Southwestern Community College, 1501 W. Townline Rd., Room 107
- Davenport: Eastern Iowa Community College, 326 W. 3rd St., Kahl Education Center, Room 300
- Des Moines: Lucas State Office Building, 321 E. 12th St., ICN Room, 6th Floor
- Dubuque: Carnegie-Stout Public Library, 360 W. 11th St.-ask Reference Desk for directions
- Fort Dodge: Trinity Regional Hospital, 802 Kenyon Rd., ICN Room
- Iowa City: Iowa City Public Library, 123 S. Linn St., Meeting Room D
- Mason City: North Iowa Area Community College, 500 College Dr., Room 106
- Ottumwa: Ottumwa Regional Health Center, 1003 Pennsylvania Ave., Conference Room A
- Sioux City: Trospar-Hoyt County Services Bldg., 822 Douglas St., ICN Room, 4th Floor
- Waterloo: Hawkeye Community College, 1501 E. Orange Rd., Room 110

The forum will open with an ICN broadcast of an Iowan's survivorship story. After the presentation, each ICN location will separate from the larger group and survivor's experiences and perceptions of life after cancer will be collected. Those interested in attending are asked to pre-register by calling 319-356-4285 or emailing [sarah-kitchell@uiowa.edu](mailto:sarah-kitchell@uiowa.edu) by Friday January 19, 2007.

Have a healthy and happy week!  
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology  
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800-362-2736