

**EPI Update for Friday, December 14, 2007
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)**

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Merck recalls Hib Vaccine**
- **“Ethical Framework for Use in a Pandemic” now available**
- **Flu activity still sporadic; all three strains circulating**
- **Norovirus**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Merck recalls Hib Vaccine

Merck and Co., Inc. (“Merck”) has initiated a voluntary, class-2 recall of two of their *Haemophilus influenzae* type B (Hib) vaccines. The products are PedvaxHIB and COMVAX (a combination Hib + Hepatitis B vaccine).

- There is no need to revaccinate children who have received the recalled vaccine. The vaccine's efficacy in providing protection against this disease is unchanged.
- No adverse reaction to the recalled vaccine has been reported in Iowa and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported no adverse reactions in the U.S. If an adverse reaction were to occur, it would be a local infection at the vaccine injection site and would occur within one week of vaccination.
- Vaccine providers in Iowa are being notified. Providers known to have received the recalled vaccine are being personally contacted by IDPH.

About 1 million doses of the vaccine are being voluntarily recalled as a part of quality assurance measures. The risk of a reaction to the recalled vaccine is extremely low, but providers should immediately discontinue use of any of the affected lots and follow Merck's instructions for returning recalled vaccine.

For more information about the recalls, visit:

www.merck.com/newsroom/press_releases/product/2007_1212.html; or
www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/recalls/hib-recall-faqs-12-12-07.htm.

“Ethical Framework for Use in a Pandemic” now available

A new document is available on the IDPH Web site to guide local public health officials in preparing for and responding to a pandemic influenza outbreak.

Developed by the Iowa Pandemic Influenza Ethics Committee, this valuable document provides a framework for decision making and examples on how to make ethical decisions in public health disaster situations.

Statewide education and distribution of this document will begin soon. In the meantime, please visit www.idph.state.ia.us/pandemic and look under “General Information.”

Flu activity still sporadic; all three strains circulating

Influenza activity is sporadic throughout Iowa. However, the University Hygienic Laboratory (UHL) has identified all three strains from specimens submitted for this season (AH1, AH3, and B). All health care providers are encouraged to submit specimens to UHL for type and strain determination. Submitting specimens allows UHL and CDC to determine which strains are predominant in Iowa and whether those strains match the vaccine.

For more information on influenza specimen submission, visit www.uhl.uiowa.edu/kitsquotesforms or call the lab at 319-335-4500.

For more information about the weekly influenza surveillance reports, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/iisn.asp.

Norovirus

In the past month, several norovirus outbreaks have occurred in the state. Norovirus specimens from patients should be submitted for laboratory testing to UHL. It is recommended to collect specimens from three to five ill persons associated with an outbreak for accurate laboratory confirmation. UHL has the ability to test for noroviruses by (real-time) RT-PCR, which detects the norovirus RNA in stool specimens.

Detection of norovirus in a stool is optimal if obtained within 48 to 72 hours after onset of symptoms. The virus can often be detected as long as five days after symptom onset and up to two weeks after recovery. Either fresh stool stored and shipped on ice packs or stool in enteric transport medium (ETM) are good specimens. ETM allows for Norovirus testing in addition to bacteriologic testing and can be shipped at ambient temperature for arrival at UHL no later than three days post collection. Vomitus will be considered under special circumstances, but is not an optimal specimen due to the low pH.

The Epi Manual contains several resources, including a norovirus environmental cleaning fact sheet and outbreak recommendations for schools, workplaces, child care centers, long-term care facilities and hospitals. These materials can be found in the Epi Manual Chapter “Information on Other Diseases” at http://www.idph.state.ia.us/idph_universalhelp/main.aspx?system=IdphEpiManual .

Test request forms for RT-PCR testing of Norovirus are available at www.uhl.uiowa.edu/kitsquotesforms/vdvbpcrrequestform.pdf.

For more information, or to request ETM, please call UHL at 319-335-4500 and ask to speak to someone in the Molecular Biology or Bacteriology Departments.

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

None

Have a healthy and happy week, and walk carefully on all this ice!

Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
Iowa Department of Public Health
800-362-2736