

**EPI Update for Friday, January 4, 2008
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)**

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Guidelines for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)**
- **Free patches and gum available through Quitline**
- **What is *C. diff*...?**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Guidelines for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

Recently, the media has covered the issue of MRSA infections. Three new documents are available on IDPH's Web site. The first, "FAQ - Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in schools and among athletes," addresses questions on how to prevent and respond to MRSA infections in schools and athletic programs. The second, "MRSA Policy/Procedure Check List in School Athletic Programs," enables coaches and trainers to determine which policies and procedures are already in place, if they are following existing policies and procedures, and what new policies might be needed. For more information, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/abx_resistant_orgs.asp.

The third document, "MRSA outpatient management flow chart," is designed to guide health care providers through various treatment options. To view the chart, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/abx_providers.asp#iartf and look under "Materials available through the Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology clearinghouse."

Free patches and gum available through Quitline

On January 1, Quitline Iowa began offering free nicotine patches and gum to help smokers and spit tobacco users overcome nicotine addiction. Nicotine replacement therapy stands to save many lives in Iowa and reduce the burden of health care costs to our state. Paid for by the \$1.00 tax increase on cigarettes enacted last year, two-week's worth of free nicotine patches or gum are available to any Iowan age 18 or older who calls Quitline Iowa. This benefit is available once per year by calling 1-800-784-8669 (1-800-QUIT-NOW).

Health care providers should also be aware of the Quitline fax number 1-800-261-6259, the fax referral service allows providers to send in a form signed by the patient that allows Quitline Iowa counselors to contact him or her. For more information, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/tobacco/default.asp

What is *C. diff*...?

Clostridium difficile is an anaerobic, spore-forming bacteria that is responsible for a wide spectrum of disease both at home and in medical facilities. If proper hand

washing doesn't occur in health care settings and if medical equipment isn't cleaned properly, this bacteria can produce spores that may persist for months or even years. Vulnerable patients can suffer from colitis and sepsis. According to the Centers for Disease Control, new strains of *C. difficile* have arisen that are much more difficult to treat, and more resistant to the antibiotics known as fluoroquinolones. Hand washing after patient contact is very important to reduce the incidence of *Clostridium difficile*. For more information, visit, www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/id_CdiffFAQ_newstrain.html.

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

“Bridging Community Partnerships through Drills and Exercises”

On January 19 at 9:00 a.m., the Upper Midwest Center for Public Health Preparedness and the University at Albany School of Public Health will present a webcast entitled *“Bridging Community Partnerships through Drills and Exercises.”* The webcast highlights the importance of partnering with community based organizations to protect vulnerable populations during disasters. The webcast will be available for rebroadcast at 3:00 p.m. Public health participants can register at

www.prepareiowa.com/Public/Announcements/default.aspx#announcement87.

Have a healthy and happy week!
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