

**EPI Update for Friday, July 31, 2009**  
**Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)**  
**Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)**

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Pregnant women and complications from novel H1N1(pandemic) flu**
- **World Breastfeeding Week: A vital emergency response**
- **Understanding water quality regulations and recommendations**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

**Pregnant women and complications from pandemic flu**

A recent *Lancet* article highlighted the increased risk for complications and death due to novel H1N1(pandemic) influenza in pregnant women. Researchers found that pregnant women accounted for 6% of novel H1N1 influenza deaths but comprise only 1% of the U.S. population. Detailed information was available on 266 people who died of novel H1N1 influenza. Of those, 15 were pregnant women.

Some of the infected women included in the study had underlying health conditions such as asthma. Researchers hypothesize that pregnant women may be more susceptible because of changes to the immune system and compression of the lungs making it harder for them to fight respiratory infections.

All women who are pregnant or will be pregnant during the influenza season should be vaccinated. The American College of obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Academy of Family Physicians also recommend routine seasonal influenza vaccination for all pregnant women. In the 2007-2008 influenza season, only 24% of pregnant women reported being vaccinated.

Seasonal influenza vaccine continues to be important. The seasonal flu vaccine protects against three strains of influenza and will be available for everyone in early fall. Despite widespread availability, only 40% of the U.S. population was vaccinated in 2008-2009 flu season. This flu season people will need both the seasonal influenza vaccine and the H1N1 influenza vaccine as it becomes available.

**World Breastfeeding Week: A vital emergency response**

The focus of this year's World Breastfeeding Week is emergency preparedness. Support of breastfeeding in emergency situations such as natural disasters, war, famine, and outbreaks of infectious disease is essential for infant survival. Disaster preparedness is something every individual should consider. The following are myths and facts about breastfeeding taken from the World Breastfeeding Week website at <http://worldbreastfeedingweek.org/>.

MYTH: “Malnourished mothers cannot breastfeed.”

FACT: Malnourished mothers can breastfeed. Moderate maternal malnutrition has little or no effect on milk production. In fact, the mother will continue to produce milk, at the expense of her own body stores. Extra food and fluids are needed to replenish the mother’s own reserves, and micronutrient supplementation may be needed. She also needs encouragement and support to breastfeed frequently.

ACTION: Feed, nurture and support the mother and let her feed the baby.

MYTH: “Stress prevents mothers from producing milk.”

FACT: Stress does not prevent production of milk, but may temporarily interfere with its flow. Breastfeeding mothers have lower stress hormone levels than non-breastfeeding mothers.

ACTION: Create conditions for mothers that lessen stress as much as possible – a protected area, reassurance from other women, keeping mothers and babies together, listening to mothers’ special needs – and making sure the child keeps suckling so that milk flow continues.

MYTH: “Once a mother stops breastfeeding, she can’t restart.”

FACT: A mother can restart breastfeeding (relactate) – there is no time limit. In some contexts, grandmothers have breastfed their grandchildren.

ACTION: Offer support for breastfeeding and relactation.

*Resources:*

Preparedness-Protect Iowa Health

<http://www.protectiowahealth.org/>

Feeding infants during emergencies

<http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2004/9241546069.pdf>

Relactation

[http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/1998/who\\_chs\\_cah\\_98.14.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/1998/who_chs_cah_98.14.pdf)

### **Understanding water quality regulations and recommendations**

Earlier this month the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit research and advocacy organization released separate reports recommending the labeling on bottled water include the same level of information required of municipal water providers. The researchers encouraged Americans to choose tap water over bottled water, along with a recommendation to purify tap water using a commercial filter.

In Iowa, public water supplies (water supplies that serve at least 25 people 60 days or more per year) are regulated by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). All public water systems must test for coliform bacteria, (an indicator of fecal contamination) at least once a month; larger systems must take multiple samples each month. Between 80 and 90 additional parameters are regulated by DNR. Water systems must test for these at frequencies determined

by the population served and the source of water. City and other larger water systems must publish a consumer confidence reports (CCR) every year. The CCR summarizes the test results for the water system and highlights detections of regulated parameters.

Home water treatment devices such as softeners, faucet-mounted filters and under-sink reverse osmosis (RO) units may be used to improve the quality of water for drinking, cooking and other purposes. If a water treatment device is sold with a claim that the device removes or reduces a health-related parameter such as mercury, lead, pesticides, organic solvents, cryptosporidium, bacteria, etc., the manufacturer must register the device with IDPH before it may be sold in Iowa. The device must be tested by an independent third-party agency prior to being registered with IDPH. Each product comes with a performance data sheet (PDS) that lists the parameters treated by the device and summarizes the performance testing results.

The full GAO report can be found on the GAO website at

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-09-861T>.

The Environmental Working Group report can be found on their website at

<http://www.ewg.org/health/report/bottledwater-scorecard>.

For more information on Iowa's water programs visit the Iowa DNR Water Supply Program website go to <http://www.iowadnr.gov/water/drinking/index.html>.

For more information on the Water Treatment System Registration Program visit the IDPH Website at [http://www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/water\\_treatment.asp](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/water_treatment.asp).

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

No announcements or trainings at this time.

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

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