

EPI Update for Friday, September 11, 2009
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Pumpkin patch and apple orchard safety**
- ***Jalapeno* preparation leads to burning hands**
- **Weekly novel influenza A (H1N1) update**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Pumpkin patch and apple orchard safety

Families and children's groups frequently take field trips to pumpkin patches and apple orchards this time of year. Such field trips are a great opportunity for children, but parents and caregivers must be aware of the potential for certain risks. Many pumpkin patches and apple orchards sell or offer free samples of fresh apple cider. Parents, caregivers, and teachers must make sure any juice consumed at any location is pasteurized.

Pasteurized products include those packaged in cans, bottles, and boxes that are found unrefrigerated in the grocery store. Unpasteurized products may be purchased as freshly pressed from local orchards, roadside stands, or farmer's markets. They may also be found on ice or in refrigerated display cases and in produce sections at grocery stores. Do not assume that because the juice is hot or bottled that it is safe for consumption. Complete pasteurization is necessary to kill organisms that have the potential to cause significant illness.

Past outbreaks have originated from juice that was only flash pasteurized or not pasteurized at all. If product labeling is unclear, ask the location owners or operators whether the juice being offered has been pasteurized. Cider which is contaminated with *E. coli* O157.H7 does not look, smell or taste different from normal apple cider. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that concerned consumers can reduce their risk of illness by heating their unpasteurized apple cider to at least 170 F. If at any time you question whether a cider has been treated to destroy harmful bacteria, avoid drinking it. For more information about food-borne illnesses, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/illness.asp.

***Jalapeno* preparation equals burning hands**

On Labor Day, the Iowa Statewide Poison Control Center (ISPCC) received calls from six separate individuals who were experiencing burning hands after cutting up jalapeno peppers (*Capsicum annuum cv. Jalapeno*). The capsaicinoids contained in the plant's oils cause both vasodilatation and intense pain. None of the six had washed their hands immediately after handling the peppers and the pain started from one to three hours after the exposure. Some remedies which

had been tried at home before calling the poison center included soaking the hands in cold water or milk, placing the hands in the freezer and washing the hands several times.

The ISPPCC recommended soaking the hands in a magnesium hydroxide-aluminum hydroxide antacid (e.g. Maalox or Mylanta). Only one patient did not receive relief from the burning pain by using this remedy.

There are many remedies touted on the Internet and include applying various skin lotions, calamine lotion, sunburn gels, first aid burn sprays, toothpaste, baking soda paste, corn starch paste, lidocaine-based gels, facial mud masks, sugar and lemon juice paste, or applying aloe vera directly from an aloe vera plant. Further suggestions include soaking or washing the hands in any of the following: salt water, ice water, orange juice, lemon juice, tomato juice, vinegar, milk, ice cream, rubbing (isopropyl) alcohol, industrial degreasers, various ethanol-containing products (mouth wash, wine, hard liquor, beer, ethanol-based hand sanitizers), household cleaning agents (e.g. Formula 409, Windex), dishwashing detergent, dishwasher soap, bleach, and baking soda.

For callers with dermal pain from exposure to jalapeno peppers, the ISPPCC typically recommends washing the hands thoroughly with warm soap and water and then soaking the hands in an antacid. Most patients will get at least some relief using antacid soaks: 40 percent will get resolution of the burning within one hour, 25 percent will get resolution in greater than one hour, and 15 percent will have only partial relief. If the antacid soaks are not effective, the poison center will recommend soaking in vegetable oil. Neither these two treatments, nor the list of remedies found on the Internet, are effective for every individual. Therefore, preventing exposure by wearing gloves while handling jalapenos, and washing your hands thoroughly afterwards is the best option. For treatment advice on this or any other poisoning, overdose or chemical exposure, call the Iowa Statewide Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Weekly novel influenza A (H1N1) update

Novel Influenza A (H1N1) activity is increasing throughout Iowa. Hospitalizations are being reported in persons primarily aged 5-24 years. Outpatient health care providers are reporting an increase in patients seen with influenza-like illness.

Reminder about testing:

Please remember these key points when considering testing patients with influenza-like illness:

- Patients considered for influenza confirmatory testing at UHL must have symptoms of influenza-like illness.
- Diagnosis of novel influenza A (H1N1) does not change the current recommended course of treatment.
- Testing is limited to surveillance and severely ill hospitalized patients, not every patient needs nor should be tested.

- All health care providers must watch for changes in influenza viruses
 - The Iowa Influenza Surveillance Network weekly surveillance report contains this information and is found at www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/iisn.asp.
 - Novel influenza A (H1N1) could reassort and/or mutate to acquire oseltamivir resistance
 - Novel influenza A (H1N1) could become more transmissible and/or more severe

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

The 2009 FDA Southwest Region Educational Conference

September 29-30 in West Des Moines. The agenda includes a range of presentations on food safety practices and food-borne illness issues. Conference registration is \$105.00 and NEHA Continuing Education credits are available. For more information or to register, contact Judy Harrison with the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals: judy.harrison@dia.iowa.gov or call 515-281-8587. For planning purposes it is requested that registration be completed by September 18, 2009.

2009 NEHA Region 4 Environmental Health Conference

September 23-24, 2009 at Arrowwood Resort & Conference Center, Okoboji, Iowa. This six-state conference will include a Healthy Homes mini-track. Session and speaker listings, registration forms, lodging information, social activities, and the latest updates can be found on the IEHA web site www.ieha.net/.

Speaker presentations or handouts will be posted in the week prior to the conference. Continuing educational credits are offered for those holding NEHA credentials. Exhibitor or sponsorship opportunities are still available. For more information, check the Web site or contact Kathy Leinenkugel, Conference Chair at kleinenk@idph.state.ia.us or 515-281-4930.

Fall Epi Update

The first of six sessions will be September 17, 2009 at Western Iowa Tech Community College in Cherokee. The brochure and registration information is available at: www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/common/pdf/cade/2009_fall_update.pdf

Have a healthy and happy week!

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