

EPI Update for Friday, August, 13, 2010
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Heat and flooding create dangerous conditions**
- **Dry dog, cat food associated with Salmonella outbreak**
- **WHO statement: H1N1 in post-pandemic period**
- **Microcystin (a toxin produced by algae) poisoning**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Heat and flooding create dangerous conditions

The combination of a dangerous heat index, a lack of clean drinking water, no air conditioning because of power outages, and continued sandbagging and other clean-up efforts create dangerous conditions that can affect health.

Although anyone at any time can suffer from heat-related illness, the people at greatest risk include:

- People age 65 or older
- Infants and young children
- Overweight individuals
- People who are performing manual labor or exercising outdoors
- People who are physically ill, especially those with heart disease or high blood pressure, or who take certain medications, such as those for depression, insomnia, or poor circulation.

Even young and healthy individuals can have a heat-related illness if they participate in physical activities during hot weather, especially when access to drinking water is limited. To protect your health when temperatures and humidity are high and you are dealing with issues like flooding, remember to keep cool and use common sense. The following tips are important:

- Increase fluid intake, regardless of your activity level: keep your urine light yellow. If it gets dark, stop and drink fluids immediately.
- If experiencing a lot of sweating, replace salt and minerals by eating foods like bananas and salty crackers, or drink beverages such as sports drinks.
- Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing and wear sunscreen if in the sun.
- Wear hats that shade your face such as sun hats, visors, etc.
- Stay in the shade or air conditioned areas as much as possible.
- Work slowly if you are not used to working or exercising in heat and humidity. Stop immediately if you get dizzy, nauseated, or feel weak. Go into an air conditioned space and drink cool liquids.

- Use a buddy system. Watch others for heat related symptoms, since some people can become confused or lose consciousness when heat stressed.

For more information about health precautions during flooding and other flood related issues, visit

www.idph.state.ia.us/EmergencyResponse/Flooding.aspx.

Dry dog, cat food associated with Salmonella outbreak

During a multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* Schwarzengrund, 79 people in 21 states became ill. Forty-eight percent were aged 2 years or younger.

A Pennsylvania study in 2007 found that dry pet food was associated with illness; 38 percent of dog fecal specimens and 9 percent of dry dog food specimens taken from nine households with human illness contained this bacteria. Since humans consumption of the pet food was not noted, indirect transmission via the pet or pet food was implicated.

To reduce the risk of these types of infection:

- wash hands after contact with pets, pet food and pet bowls.
- routinely clean pet food bowls and feeding areas.
- keep young children away from pet food and pet feeding areas.
- avoid bathing infants in the kitchen sink.

For more information see [Behravesh CB. *Pediatrics*. 2010; 126:e1-e7.](#)

WHO statement: H1N1 in post-pandemic period

On Wednesday August 11, 2010, WHO stated “the world is no longer in phase 6 of influenza pandemic alert. We are now moving into the post-pandemic period. The new H1N1 virus has largely run its course.”

This does not mean that the H1N1 virus has gone away. Iowa continues to have sporadic cases, and it is expected that the H1N1 virus will take on the behavior of a seasonal influenza virus and continue to circulate for some years to come.

Based on past pandemics, this virus will continue to cause serious disease in younger age groups, and in other groups identified during the pandemic as at higher risk of severe or fatal illness.

The 2010-2011 seasonal flu vaccine contains both the H1N1 virus, as well as the H3N2 virus that recently caused two small outbreaks in Iowa. It will also contain a B strain. (Specifically will contain A/Perth/16/2009 (H3N2)–like virus, A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)–like virus, and B/Brisbane/60/2008–like virus). The vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age or older. For more information visit www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/flu.asp , www.who.int/mediacentre/news/statements/2010/h1n1_vpc_20100810/en/index.html, or www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/vaccination/,

Microcystin (a toxin produced by algae) poisoning

This year Iowa has had more elevated microcystin levels in lakes monitored by the Department of Natural Resources and more reports of suspected cases of microcystin poisoning than in previous years. Reminder; microcystin exposure was made reportable last year and will continue to be reportable until October 31, 2010. Health care providers are encouraged to continue to be on the alert for cases of microcystin poisoning, especially during the late summer months when elevated microcystin levels historically occurred, and to report.

Microcystin poisoning may take hours or days to show up, but normally are exhibited within one week after exposure, and causes symptoms such as:

- stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headaches and fever;
- rash, hives, or skin blisters, especially on the lips or under swimsuits;
- watery eyes and nose, cough and sore throat, pleuritic pain, wheezing, and allergic reactions; and
- liver damage evidenced by an elevated SGGT

Exposure to the microcystin-producing algae can occur either by swallowing water, by having direct skin contact as when swimming or wading, or by breathing airborne droplets, such as during boating or waterskiing. Treatment is supportive.

To report a suspected case of microcystin poisoning, call 1-800-972-2026 during business hours. For questions, please contact Stuart Schmitz at 515-281-8707.

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

Learning Transformation: The Iowa Healthcare Collaborative 7th Annual Conference on Quality, Patient Safety & Value, September 1, 2010, Ames. For more information visit www.ihconline.org/asp/evntsdetail.aspx?eid=53

The Winds of Change, the Iowa Healthcare Collaborative Hospital Learning Community, September 2, 2010 Ames. For more information visit www.ihconline.org/asp/evntsdetail.aspx?eid=54

11th HIV, STD, and Hepatitis Conference 2010 – A New Decade: A Call for Change, September 22-23, Des Moines. [Click Here](#) to access on-line registration materials.

Have a healthy and happy, cool and hopefully dry week!

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