

EPI Update for Friday, May 18, 2012
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Whooping cough epidemic declared in Washington State**
- **National recreational water illness and injury (RWII) prevention week**
- **Reusable grocery bag spreads norovirus**
- **New norovirus website**
- **Mother's Day malady**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Whooping cough epidemic declared in Washington State

About 1,280 cases of whooping cough have been reported so far this year in Washington State and officials believe as many as 3,000 cases could be reported by year's end. Last week, Washington's governor announced the state is putting \$90,000 into a public awareness campaign, and diverting some federal money to pay for 27,000 doses of vaccine.

IDPH has also observed an increase in the number of reported case of pertussis across the state and has created a report to show activity. To see the report, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/Cade/default.aspx?group=3 and click on "Pertussis Update" at the bottom of the page.

National recreational water illness and injury prevention week

There are 1,250 recreational water locations in Iowa that are inspected by local health departments and IDPH. You can help keep these facilities healthy for your friends and neighbors with responsible behavior in and around the pools. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/rwi/rwi-prevention-week/index.html.

Reusable grocery bag spreads norovirus

A reusable grocery bag was linked to an outbreak of norovirus in Oregon that sickened members of a girls' soccer team. A grocery bag containing packaged cookies was in a bathroom where one of the girls was very ill with vomiting and diarrhea; the norovirus was probably spread via aerosol to the bag. The next day, the girl's teammates ate the cookies that were in the bag, and seven of 17 players became ill with similar symptoms. Tests done almost two weeks after the outbreak still found the same strain of norovirus on the bag.

The most important tool to prevent norovirus, which spreads easily and rapidly via food, water, air, fomites and directly from person to person, is good hand hygiene, isolation of ill persons, and thorough cleaning of the contaminated environment - including washing potentially contaminated reusable grocery bags.

New norovirus website

Norovirus is the leading cause of acute gastroenteritis and foodborne illness in the U.S. Stay up-to-date on norovirus by visiting the new CDC norovirus website at www.cdc.gov/norovirus.

Mother's Day malady

About 150 Mother's Day Festival celebrators in New York suffered serious illness from a massive outbreak of food poisoning. On Sunday night, just hours after attending the festival, so

many celebrators became ill at the same time that patients had to be rushed to several different hospitals in different counties. Officials suspect *Bacillus cereus* poisoning, possibly from a rice dish served at the festival.

Bacillus cereus is frequently present in uncooked rice and heat-resistant spores may survive cooking. If cooked rice is subsequently held at room temperature, vegetative forms multiply, and heat-stable toxin is produced that can survive brief re-heating, such as stir frying. In the outbreak described in this report, vegetative forms of the organism probably multiplied while the rice was held at room temperature prior to re-heating and serving at the festival.

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

None

We wish everyone a happy and healthy week!

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