

**Epi Update for Friday, February 1, 2019**  
**Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)**  
**Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)**

**Items for this week's Epi Update include:**

- **Measles outbreaks in the U.S.**
- **High norovirus activity throughout Iowa**
- **Influenza activity continues to increase, School illness absenteeism higher**
- **Change in OSHA requirements for worker blood-lead testing**
- **Super Bowl safety**
- **In the news: Antarctic penguins in danger from human diseases, researchers say**
- **In the news: Childhood lead exposure linked to poor adult mental health**
- **Infographic: Four steps to food safety**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

**Measles outbreaks in the U.S.**

Last week, the governor of Washington declared a state of emergency due to an ongoing measles outbreak that has now reached 42 cases. Additionally New York continues to manage a large measles outbreak that began last fall. The majority of cases in these outbreaks have been among unvaccinated persons. In 2018, there were 349 measles cases from 26 states and D.C. reported to the CDC. Although there have not yet been any cases in Iowa, the Iowa Department of Public Health reminds everyone that it is critical to stay up to date on vaccinations, including the MMR. Providers should consider measles in anyone presenting with fever and the 'Three Cs' – cough, coryza, and conjunctivitis followed by rash three to five days later, especially among unvaccinated persons or those who have travelled. If measles is suspected, isolate the patient and immediately call IDPH (800-362-2736 during business hours or 515-323-4360 outside business hours). Preferred testing may include serology (IgG) for evidence of immunity and a throat swab for viral detection. It is important to:

- Ensure that measles vaccination of all patients and staff are up-to-date.
- Educate all staff in your health facility about what needs to occur if measles is suspected in a patient, including but not limited to:
  - contact IDPH immediately,
  - make a list of persons that may have been exposed in your facility, and
  - close off the areas where the suspect case was for two hours (measles virus can remain viable in the air for up to two hours) to prevent further exposures.

For more information about measles, visit

<https://www.idph.iowa.gov/cade/disease-information/measles>

**High norovirus activity throughout Iowa**

IDPH, along with SHL, DIA, and local public health partners, have already investigated over a dozen norovirus outbreaks this winter linked to health care facilities, family gatherings, restaurants, and public events.

Norovirus is extremely infectious and spreads easily from person to person or via food and surfaces. Once introduced into a household, workplace, or health care facility, it can spread rapidly. Staying home while ill with vomiting or diarrhea is one of the best ways to prevent spread. Hand washing is also critical - hand sanitizers are ineffective against norovirus.

Cleaning with bleach solution or products that are specifically labelled as being effective against norovirus is the only way to remove the virus from contaminated surfaces.

All outbreaks are reportable to IDPH. General and outbreak-specific norovirus guidance for school, workplace, child care, and health care settings are available in the norovirus chapter of IDPH's Epi Manual at [wiki.idph.iowa.gov/epimanual/Home/CategoryID/183](http://wiki.idph.iowa.gov/epimanual/Home/CategoryID/183).

### **Influenza activity continues to increase, School illness absenteeism higher**

Influenza has been widespread in Iowa for the last couple weeks, and multiple measures of influenza activity have been on the rise. Positive influenza results reported from clinical laboratories have been increasing since mid-November and hit a season high 21 percent positive (550/2,680) last week. Outpatient influenza-like illness visits increased above the regional baseline of 1.6 percent. There has been a large increase in the number of Iowa schools reporting greater than 10 percent absenteeism due to illness, moving from seven schools during the first 15 weeks of surveillance to 37 schools reporting during the past two weeks. Half of these were in the northwest region of the state.

### **Change in OSHA requirements for worker blood-lead testing**

OSHA issued a memo in October 2018 stating that employers required to provide biological monitoring for workers exposed to airborne lead above the action level can now use any CLIA-approved laboratory. Samples must be analyzed for lead and zinc protoporphyrin, as previously required. Adult blood lead testing should always be done using venous specimens.

For more information, visit [www.osha.gov/SLTC/bloodlead/index.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/bloodlead/index.html) and [www.osha.gov/laws-regs/standardinterpretations/2018-10-01](http://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/standardinterpretations/2018-10-01).

### **Super Bowl safety**

The Super Bowl has become a holiday for some, with gatherings that rival major holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving.

Here are just a few Super Bowl safety tips:

- This is the peak of norovirus and influenza season. Do your friends and family a favor by staying home if you are sick!
- If you are hosting the party, protect guests from slips, trips, and falls by clearing ice and snow from walkways and ensuring there is adequate outdoor lighting.
- Don't drink and drive! Plan ahead if you will be consuming alcohol, and arrange for safe transportation.
- Wash your hands before you eat and after using the bathroom.
- Taking home leftovers? Download the FoodKeeper app, which lets you know where and how long to store your leftovers to make sure they are both tasty and safe!

### **In the news: Antarctic penguins in danger from human diseases, researchers say**

[www.cnn.com/2018/12/17/health/antarctic-penguins-bacteria-scli-intl/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2018/12/17/health/antarctic-penguins-bacteria-scli-intl/index.html)

### **In the news: Childhood lead exposure linked to poor adult mental health**

[www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/01/190123112330.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/01/190123112330.htm)

## Infographic: Four steps to food safety



To view in full size, visit

[www.flickr.com/photos/usdafoodsafety/28736432006/in/album-72157671912703496/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/usdafoodsafety/28736432006/in/album-72157671912703496/).

## Meeting announcements and training opportunities

None

**Have a healthy and happy week!**

Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology

Iowa Department of Public Health

800-362-2736