

## EPI Update for Friday, August 12, 2005

### Center For Acute Disease Epidemiology

### Iowa Department of Public Health

#### Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Influenza Surveillance - We NEED you!**
- **Study of personal West Nile Virus protection measures**
- **IDPH Launches Disaster Preparedness Campaign**
- **Summer Fun at the Iowa State Fair**
- **Humor From the Epi Files...**
- **Meetings**

#### **Influenza Surveillance- We NEED You!**

##### *Influenza Sentinel Provider Surveillance- Overview*

The Iowa Dept. of Public Health (IDPH) and the University Hygienic Laboratory (UHL) are currently recruiting healthcare providers to participate in the 2005-06 Iowa Influenza Sentinel Provider Surveillance Network.

Data from sentinel providers are *absolutely critical for monitoring the impact of influenza* and, in combination with other influenza surveillance data, can be used to *guide prevention and control activities, vaccine strain selection, and patient care.*

##### *What is required to be a sentinel provider?*

Sentinel providers report on a weekly basis the total number of patient visits per week and number of patient visits for influenza-like illness by age group to a web-based reporting center sponsored by the CDC. They are also asked to submit specimens from a subset of patients to UHL for virus isolation and strain sub-typing **free of charge**. If you choose to become a sentinel provider, CADE will work with your office to determine an efficient way of capturing the necessary data, including providing tally sheets or patient assessment forms.

##### *How are my efforts recognized?*

Sentinel providers receive feedback on the data submitted, summaries of state and national influenza data throughout the season, and a **free subscription** to CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* and *Emerging Infectious Diseases Journal*.

##### *How do you sign up to be sentinel provider?*

Providers of any specialty (e.g., family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics) in any type of practice (e.g., private practice, public health clinic, emergency room, university student health center) are eligible to participate. If interested contact Meghan Harris at IDPH, by telephone at 515-281-7134 or via email at [mharris@idph.state.ia.us](mailto:mharris@idph.state.ia.us) [<mailto:mharris@idph.state.ia.us>](mailto:mharris@idph.state.ia.us) as soon as possible.

### **Study of personal West Nile Virus protection measures**

In the upcoming September issue of the *Emerging Infectious Disease* journal, there is an interesting study concerning reducing risk for West Nile Virus (WNV) infection. Dr. Loeb **et al** conducted a cross-sectional household survey of personal protective behaviors (avoidance of exposure to mosquitoes, wearing long sleeves and pants, using mosquito repellent) and compared these with risk of WNV infection. They found that people who practice two or more of these protective behaviors had a >50 percent reduction in risk of infection.

Ontario experienced an outbreak of WNV in 2002, which led to unprecedented cases of meningitis and encephalitis. The study also found that time spent outside at dusk or dawn on a non-work day was a significant risk factor for WNV infection and that finding mosquitoes in the home was not associated with WNV infection. This is the first study to provide evidence to support the benefit of personal protective behavior in reducing risk for WNV infection. More details can be found at the CDC website at this link:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/vol11no09/04-1184.htm>

### **IDPH Launches Disaster Preparedness Campaign**

Sometimes fear of the unknown can cause paralysis in people in the event of an emergency. But with disaster preparedness, there are several simple things people can do beforehand to help make sure they can cope with a natural or terror-caused disaster.

On Aug. 10, IDPH launched a statewide public media campaign about public health preparedness to encourage Iowans to take action now to protect loved ones and prepare for the unexpected. Calls to action in Phase 1 of the campaign include:

- Learning which items should be in a household emergency kit and
- Setting up a communication plan with loved ones in an emergency

Messages are being delivered via newspaper, television, and radio advertisements in English and Spanish.

A free public health emergency guidebook will be available in Iowa communities, distributed by various allied partners, local public health agencies, and hospitals. The guidebook includes checklists on the above-mentioned emergency kits and communication plans, as well as information on immunization, quarantine and isolation, disease monitoring, the Strategic National Stockpile, and coping with a public health emergency.

Visit the website [www.protectionowahealth.org](http://www.protectionowahealth.org) <<http://www.protectionowahealth.org>> for additional information.

## Summer Fun at the Iowa State Fair

Typically over one million people visit the Iowa state fair and IDPH-CADE would like everyone to follow some simple steps to ensure they have an enjoyable experience and reduce their chances of illness if they visit an animal exhibit while at the fair:

- Find out where hand-washing stations are located and use them.
- No hand-to-mouth activities (eating, drinking, smoking, carrying toys, and pacifiers) should occur in an area of animal interaction or before washing your hands.
- Always wash your hands after petting animals or touching the animal enclosure, especially before eating and drinking.
- Running water and soap are best for hand washing. Use alcohol-based hand gels if running water and soap are not available.
- Young children need to be supervised while in the exhibit and afterwards to ensure proper hand washing technique.

Information regarding hygiene at animal exhibits can also be found on CDC's website at: [http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/spotlight\\_an\\_exhbts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/spotlight_an_exhbts.htm)

Also on this website page is a link to the National Association for State Public Health Veterinarians' "Compendium of Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings, 2005":

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5404a1.htm>

## Humor From the Epi Files...

*So many crazy things occur in public health, that we thought we'd share a couple with you over the next few weeks.*

Being in public health creates great opportunities. How many people get to go on RAGBRAI and call it work? A couple of years ago we did three studies while riding RAGBRAI: one on injuries, one on the knowledge of exercise of those watching but not participating in RAGBRAI, and one on the risks associated with drinking alcohol and biking. My favorite interview was of an older woman who was on her porch watching the bikers ride by. I started asking her questions about her knowledge of how much exercise a person should get. But rather than answering my questions, she spent 15 minutes ranting and raving about how terrible it was that the town had spent so much on porta-potties for the riders. I cut the interview short and decided that I wouldn't ask if I could use her bathroom.

## Meetings:

“The Importance of Environmental Health in Emergency Response and Preparedness”,  
August 25, on the Iowa Communications Network. Register thru [www.prepareiowa.com](http://www.prepareiowa.com)  
<<http://www.prepareiowa.com>>