



EPI Update for Friday, December 3, 2021

**Office of the Public Health Medical Director
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Bureau of HIV, STD, and Hepatitis**

Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Omicron identified in multiple states across the US**
- **Influenza activity still low but continuing to increase in Iowa**
- **COVID-19: Expanded vaccination and MIS-C update**
- **World AIDS Day**
- **In the news: US Covid vaccinations spike, several states confirm omicron cases**
- **In the news: Scientists made a map of the nasty diseases ticks can give you**
- **Infographic: HIV – Know the facts**

Omicron identified in multiple states across the US

Omicron has been detected in multiple states across the US. Studies to characterize the transmissibility and severity of illness associated with this variant are ongoing. It will likely take days to weeks for international public health officials to collect and fully analyze this data.

Omicron has not been identified in Iowa to date. SHL continues to sequence approximately 300 positive samples each week. Some laboratories have instruments that can distinguish potential Omicron variants from the other COVID-19 variants that are circulating. SHL has requested that laboratories with that capacity, prioritize sending potential Omicron variants to SHL for sequencing.

For additional information, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/scientific-brief-omicron-variant.html>

Influenza activity still low but continuing to increase in Iowa

While overall influenza activity is still low, several components of the Iowa Influenza Surveillance Network are showing increased activity. The timing of this increase is typical, as influenza activity often starts increasing in October and peaks during the winter months.

The percent of positive molecular influenza tests reported on the Iowa Respiratory Virus Survey has increased the last 3 weeks to 2.3%. The percent of visits to outpatient surveillance sites due to influenza-like illness rose above the 1.7% regional baseline for the first time this

season, to 2.4%. Surveillance sites reported 8 hospitalizations last week for a rate of 16.35 per 10,000 hospitalizations - higher than 2018-19 and 2020-21 rates for the same time period.

So far this season, all influenza viruses subtyped at SHL have been AH3N2, with over 90% of these from persons ages 24 and younger. Influenza AH3N2 is often associated with more severe flu seasons, but the severity varies by season and personal characteristics of infected individuals, such as age and health status.

This increase in influenza activity highlights the importance of vaccination, especially in the midst of the holidays. IDPH recommends everyone 6 months and older get an annual influenza vaccine, especially for people at high risk of complications or those who come in contact with high-risk persons. It is also important for people at high-risk for severe disease who become ill to talk to a health care provider about the need for antiviral influenza drugs. These drugs work best when taken as soon as possible after illness onset, at least within 48 hours.

For more information about influenza activity in Iowa or influenza vaccination, visit <https://idph.iowa.gov/influenza>.

COVID-19: Expanded vaccination and MIS-C update

To date, 74% of Iowans age 18 and over and 71% of Iowans age 12 and over have received at least one dose of the vaccine. CDC has also recently authorized the pediatric Pfizer vaccine, and Iowa children aged 5-11 are now eligible to begin receiving COVID-19 vaccinations.

While fewer children have been sick with COVID-19 compared to adults, children can be infected with the virus, and there is no way to tell in advance if a child will get a severe or mild case. After a natural infection, some children have developed a rare but serious disease that is linked to COVID-19 called multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C). Since the beginning of the pandemic, 68 cases of MIS-C have been reported to IDPH.

To find vaccine providers near you, visit <https://vaccinate.iowa.gov>.

World AIDS Day

December 1 marked the 33rd World AIDS Day. This year's theme is *Ending The Epidemic: Equitable Access, Everyone's Voice*. The U.S. also commemorated 40 years since the first cases of what has become known as HIV/AIDS were reported to CDC. In recognition, the White House Office of National AIDS Policy, or ONAP, released a new *National HIV/AIDS Strategy 2022-2025*.

The plan highlights that while new HIV infections in the U.S. fell 8% from 2015 to 2019, increases in diagnoses were experienced among people who use drugs; Black and Latinx populations continue to be disproportionately impacted; and the epidemic is growing more concentrated in the South. The new plan focuses more strongly on addressing the social determinants of health that influence a person's risk for and outcomes associated with HIV. Other updates include new emphases on using harm reduction strategies for people who use drugs and addressing systemic racism as a public health threat. A federal implementation plan is slated to follow in the spring.

For more information about World AIDS Day, visit www.hiv.gov/events/awareness-days/world-aids-day.

In the news: US Covid vaccinations spike, several states confirm omicron cases
www.cnn.com/2021/12/03/us-covid-vaccinations-spike-as-several-states-confirm-omicron-cases.html

In the news: Scientists made a map of the nasty diseases ticks can give you
<https://gizmodo.com/scientists-made-a-map-of-the-nasty-diseases-ticks-can-g-1848149348>

Infographic: HIV – Know the facts

KNOW
the facts

Knowing the facts about HIV means knowing how to protect yourself. Here are some tips:

- 1. ABSTINENCE IS THE ONLY 100% EFFECTIVE HIV PREVENTION OPTION.** Abstinence means not having oral, vaginal or anal sex.
- 2. USE A CONDOM EVERY TIME, THE RIGHT WAY.** Put on a new condom each time before you have sex, and keep it on from start to finish. If it breaks during sex, stop and put on another condom.
- 3. CHOOSE LESS RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIOR.** For example, oral sex is less risky than anal or vaginal sex. Anal sex is the riskiest.
- 4. HAVE FEWER PARTNERS.** The more people you have sex with, the higher your chances of getting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- 5. GET TESTED AND TREATED FOR OTHER STDs.** Sexually transmitted diseases can raise your risk of getting HIV or transmitting it to someone else. Tell your partners to get tested too.

THINK YOU'RE AT HIGH RISK FOR HIV? ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT PREP.
PrEP is pre-exposure prophylaxis. PrEP is a pill you take every day to keep you from getting HIV. Ask your doctor if PrEP is right for you.

WORRIED YOU'VE BEEN EXPOSED TO HIV? FIND OUT IF YOU NEED PEP RIGHT AWAY.
PEP is post-exposure prophylaxis. It's medication you take to help prevent HIV if you are accidentally exposed. You have to start PEP within 72 hours of exposure. If you need PEP, ask your doctor or go to the Emergency Room immediately.

Learn how to protect yourself at
WWW.CDC.GOV/ACTAGAINSTAIDS

ACT AGAINST AIDS

To view in full size, visit
www.cdc.gov/stophivtogether/library/hiv-prevention-resources/posters/cdc-lsht-youth-poster-know-the-facts.pdf.

Have a healthy and happy week!

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