

EPI Update for Friday, December 22, 2006  
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology  
Iowa Department of Public Health

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

- **Flu goes regional**
- **Monona county outbreak of the flu**
- **Carbon monoxide in emergencies**
- **Egg safety during the holiday season**
- **A Holiday Health Song...**
- **Trainings: Webcast – Engaging the Public in Pandemic Flu Planning**

**Flu goes regional**

Influenza activity for the week ending Dec. 16<sup>th</sup> is regional. There are significant clusters of influenza in two regions of the state. Three strains of influenza have been confirmed in Iowa, and all three are covered by this year's flu vaccine. For more information on influenza surveillance, visit the IDPH Web site at [www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/iisn.asp](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/iisn.asp).

It is not too late to vaccinate! Although influenza activity is increasing, now is still a perfect time to get an influenza vaccination. Vaccination is especially important this year with all three predominant strains circulating in the state.

**Monona county outbreak of the flu**

Last week an outbreak of influenza A(H1) was reported in a Monona County school. The school experienced rates of absence due to influenza that exceeded 10 percent for six school days. The Monona County Health Department, the school and other local partners did an excellent job responding to the outbreak. The following describes a few of their immediate and future actions, all are great ideas for responding to an influenza outbreak:

- Informative letters were sent home to parents encouraging ill children to stay home;
- Specimens collected from ill cases were quickly sent to the state hygienic laboratory for confirmation;
- A newspaper article about the situation was published in the local paper;
- Assessed the area influenza vaccine supply by contacting all area health care providers;
- Screened neighboring schools for absence due to influenza;
- Sent newsletters to all county schools and health care providers;
- The health department administrator met with the local board of health to emphasize the need to focus efforts on prevention to avoid emergency situations like this in the future; and
- **A coordinated county influenza vaccination campaign to include:**

- 400 pediatric and 300 adult doses;
- Vaccinations given after school on Friday, Dec. 22, before the holiday break, at the Lutheran Church in Monona. (What a great present for the children!); and
- Flyers advertising the clinic have been placed in many public places including schools, health care providers, grocers and pharmacies.

The county coordinated the receipt of influenza vaccine from the state health department and private providers in order to acquire enough doses for their clinic. Influenza vaccination is the best protection against influenza illness, and the prompt offering of vaccine by Monona County may prevent the spread of influenza throughout their community.

### **Carbon monoxide in emergencies**

With Iowa still waiting for the first blizzard to strike, it makes sense to consider the potential dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Every year, more than 500 people die in the U. S. from accidental CO poisoning. CO is an odorless, colorless gas that can cause sudden illness and death if inhaled. When power outages occur during emergencies such as hurricanes or winter storms, the use of alternative sources of fuel or electricity for heating, cooling, or cooking can cause CO to build up in a home or garage and to poison the people and animals inside.

Generators, grills, camp stoves, or other gasoline, propane, natural gas, or charcoal-burning devices should never be used inside an enclosed area, such as a home, basement or garage, or even outside near an open window. Every home should have at least one working carbon monoxide detector. The detector's batteries should be checked twice a year, at the same time smoke detector batteries are checked. Go to [www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/common/pdf/epi\\_manual/carbon\\_monoxide.pdf](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/common/pdf/epi_manual/carbon_monoxide.pdf) for more information.

### **Egg safety during the holiday season**

Eggs can cause diseases such as salmonella, so it is important to follow these guidelines, especially for those most vulnerable to food-borne illness, such as the very young, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems due to conditions such as HIV/AIDS.

Iowa should pay special attention to the handling of eggs and the preparation of foods that contain eggs during this holiday season. Some holiday favorites, such as cookie dough, homemade eggnog, and some types of stuffing, may contain eggs that are raw or undercooked. Eggs sometimes contain bacteria called *Salmonella enteritidis* (SE), which can cause illness if eggs are not handled and cooked properly. An FDA national survey of consumer food safety practices, found that cookie dough is one of the major sources of raw egg in the American diet, and that only three percent of respondents always use a food thermometer when they cook baked egg dishes such as stuffing.

To avoid egg-related illness from holiday foods:

- Do not eat unbaked cookie dough;
- Cook baked egg-containing dishes to 160 degrees F; and
- If a recipe calls for raw or undercooked eggs, such as eggnog, use instead, pasteurized egg products or eggs treated to destroy bacteria.

An estimated 118,000 illnesses per year are caused by consumption of eggs contaminated with SE.

To prevent illness from bacteria, keep eggs refrigerated, cook eggs until yolks are firm, and cook foods containing eggs thoroughly.

*To help us keep healthy over the holidays:*

**A Holiday Health Song...**

**(Sung to the tune of *The Twelve Days of Christmas*)**

The **first** way to health, said the CDC to me  
[Wash hands](#) to be safe and healthy.

The **second** way to health, said the CDC to me  
[Bundle up for warmth](#), and wash hands to be safe and healthy.

The **third** way to health, said the CDC to me  
[Manage stress](#), bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.

The **fourth** way to health, said the CDC to me  
[Don't drink and drive](#), manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.

The **fifth** way to health, said the CDC to me  
[BE SMOKE-FREE](#), don't drink and drive, manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.

The **sixth** way to health, said the CDC to me  
[Fasten belts while driving](#), BE SMOKE-FREE, don't drink and drive, manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.

The **seventh** way to health, said the CDC to me  
[Get exams and screenings](#), fasten belts while driving, BE SMOKE-FREE, don't drink and drive, manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.

The **eighth** way to health, said the CDC to me  
[Get your vaccinations](#), get exams and screenings, fasten belts while driving, BE SMOKE-FREE, don't drink and drive, manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.

The **ninth** way to health, said the CDC to me  
[Monitor the children](#), get your vaccinations, get exams and screenings, fasten belts while driving, BE SMOKE-FREE, don't drink and drive, manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.

The **tenth** way to health, said the CDC to me  
[Practice fire safety](#), monitor the children, get your vaccinations, get exams and screenings, fasten belts while driving, BE SMOKE-FREE, don't drink and drive, manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.

The *eleventh* way to health, said the CDC to me  
[Prepare dinner safely](#), practice fire safety, monitor the children, get your vaccinations, get exams and screenings, fasten belts while driving, BE SMOKE-FREE, don't drink and drive, manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.

The *twelfth* way to health, said the CDC to me  
[Eat well and get moving](#), prepare dinner safely, practice fire safety, monitor the children, get your vaccinations, get exams and screenings, fasten belts while driving, BE SMOKE-FREE, don't drink and drive, manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.

To view a video, complete with song lyrics, go to  
[www.cdc.gov/women/owh/holiday/12waysSong.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/women/owh/holiday/12waysSong.htm).

### **Meetings:**

#### **Webcast – Engaging the Public in Pandemic Flu Planning**

*For those with access to Iowa's Learning Management System*

Sponsored by the Upper Midwest Center for Public Health Preparedness

Jan. 11, 2007 broadcast from 9:00-10:00 a.m. and again 3:00-4:00 p.m.

Register:

[www.prepareiowa.com/Public/Catalog/Description.aspx?u=kM6WW0gCRpmua%2br1qcnl1G0cJkpZVNPYjH6EyfwdZ%2fmm6%2bBn6tAfGmIM3SdyZUf4IREELAzHO4%3d](http://www.prepareiowa.com/Public/Catalog/Description.aspx?u=kM6WW0gCRpmua%2br1qcnl1G0cJkpZVNPYjH6EyfwdZ%2fmm6%2bBn6tAfGmIM3SdyZUf4IREELAzHO4%3d)

**No EPI update is planned for Friday, December 29<sup>th</sup> because of the holidays. The next one will on Friday, January 5<sup>th</sup>.**

**We at CADE hope all of you have healthy and happy holidays!**

**Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology**

**Iowa Department of Public Health**

**800-362-2736**