Public Health
IOWA HHS

Epi Update for Friday, February 9, 2024

CENTER FOR ACUTE DISEASE EPIDEMIOLOGY (CADE)
BUREAU OF HIV, STI, AND HEPATITIS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Items for this week's Epi Update include

- **CDC releases national STI surveillance data**
- **US HHS releases *Vector-borne Disease National Strategy***
- **FSIS Issues Public Health Alert Due to *Listeria* Contamination**
- **Infographic: *Listeria***

CDC releases national STI surveillance data

Last week, CDC released the latest national surveillance data on sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The data are from 2022 and highlight trends in chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis. Although there was a decrease in reported cases of gonorrhea, other STIs continue to increase. Most notably, syphilis is at its highest levels since the 1950s. Congenital syphilis, in which the infection is transmitted to the fetus or newborn via an untreated mother, also continues to climb. In the last five years, congenital syphilis cases have increased nationally more than 180%.

Unfortunately, these trends in syphilis are mirrored in Iowa. Provisional data from 2023 indicate 940 cases, an increase of more than 230% since 2018. When examining only the early/infectious stages of syphilis, the increase is even greater. Provisional 2023 data show 625 cases, an increase of 260% since 2018. There were 13 cases of congenital syphilis in 2023, the most recorded in a single year in several decades. The previous high was 11 in 2021. By comparison, from 2016 to 2020 there were only eight cases total. Some of the congenital cases in the last few years have resulted in stillbirth or neonatal death.

Federal partners are taking steps to further address the increases. Recent examples include the formation of a National Syphilis and Congenital Syphilis Syndemic (NSCSS) Federal Task Force and allowing the importation of medications from Europe to address drug shortages in the U.S. In Iowa, we are building upon our outbreak detection and response strategies, partnering with health systems, local public health, and other community-based organizations, and supporting our state's Disease Intervention Specialists who follow up directly with persons diagnosed with or exposed to syphilis. Because the reasons for the continued increases are multifactorial, integrated responses across sectors (e.g., public health and healthcare) are crucial.

To view the newly released CDC national surveillance data, visit www.cdc.gov/std/statistics/2022/default.htm.

For more information about the NSCSS Federal Task Force, visit www.hiv.gov/blog/hhs-announces-department-actions-to-slow-surging-syphilis-epidemic/.

US HHS releases *Vector-borne Disease National Strategy*

Diseases spread via mosquitoes, ticks, fleas, and lice are major causes of death and illness worldwide, and they increasingly threaten the health and well-being of people in the United States. Examples include Lyme disease, Zika virus, West Nile virus, dengue, malaria, plague, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and alpha-gal syndrome. According to CDC, reported cases of these diseases doubled nationally over the last two decades.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently released the *National Public Health Strategy to Prevent and Control Vector-Borne Diseases in People* (VBD National Strategy). The strategy identifies and describes federal priorities to detect, prevent, respond to, and control diseases and conditions caused by vectors in the United States. This VBD National Strategy represents the largest formal federal coordination effort focused on vector-borne disease prevention and control with contributions by over 50 representatives across 17 federal agencies. This collaborative effort will help

- address the significant public health challenges related to vector-borne diseases
- incorporate a One Health approach to enhance coordination and communication across human, animal, and environmental areas
- reverse the upward trends in illness, suffering, and death.

At Iowa HHS, CADE works with national and local partners to monitor and prevent vector-borne diseases. Tick-borne and mosquito-borne diseases are reportable in Iowa, and public health follows-up on reported cases individually. CADE publishes a *Vector-Borne Disease Surveillance Report* each week during months when mosquitos and ticks are active. The report highlights current trends in comparison to historical disease activity. Mosquito and tick bite prevention is critical to reducing risk, and detailed guidance for both is also available from Iowa HHS.

To view the full *National Public Health Strategy to Prevent and Control Vector-Borne Diseases in People*, visit www.cdc.gov/ncezid/dvbd/framework.html.

For more information about vector-borne diseases in Iowa, including the *Vector-Borne Disease Weekly Surveillance Report*, visit hhs.iowa.gov/public-health/center-acute-disease-epidemiology/tick-borne-and-mosquito-borne-disease.

FSIS Issues Public Health Alert Due to *Listeria* Contamination

On February 8, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) issued a public health alert for ready-to-eat (RTE) poultry burrito products containing Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulated dairy products that have been recalled by Rizo-Lopez Foods, due to concerns that the products may be contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*. FSIS issued this public health alert to ensure that consumers are aware that these products should not be consumed. The RTE poultry burrito items were produced on various dates between June 20, 2023 and December 30, 2023.

Consumption of food contaminated with *L. monocytogenes* can cause listeriosis, a serious infection that primarily affects older adults, persons with weakened immune systems, and pregnant women and their newborns. Listeriosis can cause fever, muscle aches, headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance and convulsions sometimes preceded by diarrhea or other gastrointestinal symptoms. In pregnant women, the infection can cause miscarriages, stillbirths, premature delivery or life-threatening infection of the newborn. In addition, serious and sometimes fatal infections can occur in older adults and persons with weakened immune systems. Persons who consumed a recalled product and develop symptoms of listeriosis within ten weeks should contact their healthcare provider.

For more information about the FSIS recall, visit www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls-alerts/fsis-issues-public-health-alert-ready-eat-poultry-products-containing-fda-regulated.

For more information about the FDA recall, visit https://www.fda.gov/safety/major-product-recalls/2024-recalls-food-products-associated-dairy-products-rizo-lopez-foods-inc-due-potential-risk

Infographic: *Listeria*

To view in full size, visit www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/images/socialmedia/339368-C__Pregnant-Women-1080-x-1080-large.jpg?_=85603.

Have a healthy and happy week!

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