

Epi Update for Friday, October 24, 2025

CENTER FOR ACUTE DISEASE EPIDEMIOLOGY (CADE)

Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (Iowa HHS)

Items for this week's Epi Update include

- **Update: Measles cases continue to be reported in the U.S.**
- **Alpha-gal syndrome in Iowa and free CDC online training**
- **Teal Pumpkin Project**
- **Infographic: Join the Teal Pumpkin Project!**

Update: Measles cases continue to be reported in the U.S.

As of October 21, a total of 1,618 confirmed measles cases were reported in the United States. Although down significantly from the spring peak, an increasing number of cases have been reported late summer into fall. Multiple states are experiencing outbreaks, including Minnesota. Iowa has identified eight cases of measles in 2025, with the last case reported in July.

Measles is characterized by a prodrome of fever, cough, coryza, and conjunctivitis (the three "C"s), followed by a maculopapular rash that spreads from the head to the trunk to the lower extremities. Consider measles in patients presenting with febrile rash illness and clinically compatible symptoms, especially if they recently traveled to an area impacted by an outbreak or were exposed to a person with febrile rash illness.

Health care providers who suspect measles should immediately notify CADE while the patient is still at the health care facility by calling 800-362-2736 during business hours or 515-323-4360 after hours.

Health care providers should also routinely evaluate patient vaccination status and promote measles containing vaccines (MMR or MMRV) for patients who do not have presumptive evidence of immunity.

Iowa HHS and local public health departments conduct thorough investigations of each measles case and reach out to any identified contacts. The best prevention for measles is the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine.

For updates from CDC about measles in the U.S., visit www.cdc.gov/measles/data-research/index.html.

Alpha-gal syndrome in Iowa and free CDC online training

In July 2024, alpha-gal syndrome (AGS) became a reportable condition in Iowa. Since then, 74 AGS cases have been identified. AGS is a serious, potentially life-threatening tickborne disease. People with AGS can have an allergic reaction to red meat and other products containing alpha-gal, like dairy and some medications. People can develop AGS after being bitten by some types of ticks, primarily the lone star tick in the United States. CDC estimates that as many as 450,000 people might be impacted by AGS in the U.S.

To increase awareness of AGS and more rapidly diagnose patients, CDC has released a new free online training module for health care providers, epidemiologists, and public health officials, *Understanding and Managing Alpha-gal Syndrome for Healthcare Providers*. Continuing education credits are available.

To access the training, visit www.cdc.gov/alpha-gal-syndrome/hcp/resources-training/index.html.

Teal Pumpkin Project

Food allergies affect 1 in 13 children in the U.S., and traditional Halloween candy often contains common allergens like peanuts, milk, or wheat.

The Teal Pumpkin Project is a nationwide initiative that promotes inclusion for children with food allergies or other dietary restrictions during Trick or Treating / Beggar's Night. By displaying a teal pumpkin, households signal that they offer non-food treats like glow sticks, stickers, or small toys. For safety, those offering both candy and non-food treats should keep them in separate bowls.

Families can join by adding a teal pumpkin to their doorstep and offering allergy-friendly options - or even listing their home on the project's interactive map to help local families plan their route.

To learn more, visit www.foodallergy.org/our-initiatives/awareness-campaigns/teal-pumpkin-project.

Infographic: Join the Teal Pumpkin Project!

TEAL PUMPKIN PROJECT
FOODALLERGY.ORG

Join the Teal Pumpkin Project!

1 in 13 children have food allergy, which can cause life-threatening allergic reactions. Food allergy is a disease, not a diet.
Will you help make Halloween fun for everyone?

Joining the Teal Pumpkin Project is as easy as turning a pumpkin from orange to teal.
(Good news: it's actually much easier than that.)

What If You Couldn't?
What if you had food allergy, and your body's immune system reacts to what should be a harmless food protein? A reaction can be as bad as life-threatening anaphylaxis.

Every 10 seconds in the U.S., a food allergy reaction sends a patient to the emergency room.

Nearly any food can trigger an allergic reaction. The "top 9" most common allergens includes several foods that regularly appear as ingredients in candy.

Some kids and their families don't feel comfortable trick-or-treating, because the risk of being exposed to an allergen is just too high.

But...

What If You Could?
When you offer non-food treats, more children get to enjoy Halloween without fear!

Ideas for Non-Food Treats

- Mini notebooks
- Playing cards
- Stickers
- Fidget toys
- Mini puzzles
- Glow sticks
- Pencils and pens
- Bubbles
- Bouncy balls
- Spider rings

Did You Know?

- Candy corn often contains egg whites.
- Candy "minis" may have different ingredients than their larger counterparts.
- Licorice typically contains wheat as a binding ingredient.
- Dark chocolate often contains traces of milk.
- There is no such thing as "allergy-free" candy.
- Make-up products or face paints may contain food allergens as ingredients.
- Some brands of moldable clay contain wheat.

To view in full size, visit

www.foodallergy.org/sites/default/files/2025-10/Teal%20Pumpkin%20Project%20Flyer_2025.pdf.

Have a healthy and happy week!
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
800-362-2736