

EPI Update for Friday, September 12, 2008
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **September is Food Safety Education Month**
- **Flu vaccine supply highest ever and early**
- **An alternative to the tuberculosis (TB) skin test**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

September is Food Safety Education Month

This is the second of four easy lessons on 1) Clean, 2) Separate, 3) Cook and 4) Chill. This week's tip to Be Food Safe is to SEPARATE: Don't cross-contaminate one food with another. Cross-contamination occurs when disease-causing organisms are spread from a food to a surface, from a surface to a food or from one food to another.

To prevent cross-contamination:

- Use one cutting board for raw meat, poultry, and seafood, and another for salads and ready-to-eat food.
- Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood, and their juices apart from other food items in your grocery cart.
- Store raw meat, poultry, and seafood in a container or on a plate so juices can't drip on other foods.

Each week during the month of September, CADE and the Bureau of Environmental Health Services will be providing tips in the Epi Update on educating the public on steps they can use to handle and prepare food safely. Look for next week's tip on cooking foods to proper temperatures.

For more information on National Food Safety Education Month visit www.foodsafety.gov/~fsg/september.html.

Flu vaccine supply highest ever and early

Vaccine manufacturers are projecting that as many as 143 million to 146 million doses of influenza vaccine will be manufactured for use in the United States during the 2008-09 influenza season. This is an all-time high supply of vaccine, making it possible for more people than ever to seek protection from the flu.

All three strains in this season's vaccine have changed from last year. The vaccine components are:

- A/Brisbane/59/2007(H1N1)-like virus.
- A/Brisbane/10/2007 (H3N2)-like virus.
- B/Florida/4/2006-like virus.

The A/Wisconsin/67/2005 (H3N2)-like strain contained the 2007-2008 vaccine was believed to protect about 40% of people who received the vaccine. The strain was changed to better match what international experts believe will be the dominant H3N2 strain in 2008-2009. Similarly, the influenza B/Malaysia/2506/2004-like strain from last season's vaccine was changed to the B/Florida strain after a new lineage of influenza B widely circulated last season.

Since vaccine is already arriving in some Iowa medical practices, many providers have posed the questions of whether vaccine should be administered now and whether it protects for the duration of the flu season. The immunity provided by the vaccine lasts about a year so vaccination in August or early September will continue to provide protection for the duration of the flu season. Early receipt of vaccine supply extends the amount of time flu vaccine is available by giving providers more opportunities to protect patients.

There has been an expansion of ages of children recommended for influenza vaccination for the 2008-2009 influenza season. Children five years of age through 18 years of age should be vaccinated against influenza beginning in 2008. Children 6 months of age to 5 years of age were already recommended for vaccination.

An alternative to the tuberculosis (TB) skin test

Iowa physicians and public health agencies have an alternative to the TB skin test. The University Hygienic Laboratory (UHL) now offers Quantiferon TB Gold (QFTBG) and Quantiferon TB In Tube (QFTBIT) tests. Quantiferon is a blood test that measures and compares the amount of interferon-gamma (IFN-g) released by blood cells in response to antigens. The QFTBG assay was FDA approved in 2005; the QFTBIT assay was FDA approved in 2007. The benefit of the QFTBIT assay is a longer time frame for submission to the testing laboratory, making transport to the lab much simpler. Collection of the test requires special tubes which UHL provides. To order this test call UHL at (319) 335-4500 at least 24 hours prior to collection to arrange for testing and transportation. Specimens are only accepted Monday through Thursday and must arrive before 4:00 p.m.

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

University Hygienic Lab (UHL) Fall Professional Forum

UHL will be offering their Fall Professional Forum for sentinel laboratorians and other interested professionals in October at the following locations:

Waverly, October 8.

Davenport, October 9.

Washington, October 15.

Ankeny, October 21.

Atlantic, October 28.

Sioux City, October 29.

For more information and to register, visit www.UHL.Ulowa.edu under the Education/Training tab.

Have a healthy and happy week!

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