

EPI Update for Monday, December 29, 2008
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for these two weeks' EPI Update include:

- **New Year's and public health resolutions**
- **Shigellosis cases rise rapidly in recent weeks**
- **Influenza update**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

New Year's and public health resolutions

"You must be the change you seek in the world." –Mahatma Gandhi

As Gandhi suggested, public health needs to provide role models for healthy behavior. Let's start with logical and sustainable goals both for public health and for the individual. Hopefully, any resolution will be obtainable and sustainable. All too often resolutions tend toward the opposite end of the spectrum. You know - lose 50 pounds, run a marathon, and cure cancer. Lofty goals like these are seldom achievable and almost never long-lasting. On the other hand, a 200 pound adult losing 2 pounds (1%) a week or even a month over time tends to be more successful.

1) Take small steps toward a larger goal. Better health is served well by adding small amounts of activity, eliminating one unhealthy beverage, or adding one healthy fruit to your daily routine. Because you can accomplish them so rapidly, small steps like these keep you motivated. The larger goals keep you challenged and growing.

2) Write your goals down and track them. Put them on your calendar or make a tabulation sheet for your refrigerator. Remember, what gets measured is what changes! I would suggest going as far as writing a contract or MOU with yourself and having a witness sign it.

3) Public health reaches its goals via collaboration. Anyone can do the same with personal goals.. Join others with similar goals. This is the reason Lighten Up Iowa has been so successful year after year. Now called Live Healthy Iowa, the program makes great use of positive peer pressure. Live Healthy Iowa is a team based activity program that encourages participants to make positive changes that lead to a healthier lifestyle. To form a team and participate in Live Healthy Iowa, visit www.livehealthyiowa.org/

4) Create a marketing or public relations plan. Whether you're on a team or not, tell as many people as possible of your plans. Letting others know your intentions can help you find allies. It also creates an additional reason to stick to your goal.

5) Watch the budget. In 2009, we need to strive for balance and mutually supportive public health and personal goals. For example, walking to work or taking the bus can add to your health while reducing your costs (another popular resolution this year).

Health-related goals are often supported by efforts in the areas of personal finance, family, relationships, learning, and career.

6) Don't skimp on the reasons for your resolution. Examine all the reasons you wish to accomplish your goal. Then place reminders around you to keep you motivated. For example, you may place a quote on your bathroom mirror, a number on your scale, or a picture of a grandchild you wish to see wed on your refrigerator. Also remember to include frequent talks to yourself on how you are going to be successful and why.

7) Review the literature or in this case, draw inspiration from others. Here at the Iowa Department of Public Health we all draw success from the progress of fellow employees that have transformed themselves from sedentary adults to walkers and runners. Over 100 health department employees participated in the Des Moines Marathon this year!

8) Plan ahead. Understand that there will be barriers, pitfalls, and other problems. Then create a plan for dealing with such issues. In public health we need to plan for the flu season before the fall - so plan with your timeline in mind. Be sure to set a date to review and renew your efforts. Be willing to change target dates or take a break, but also plan on getting back on track.

9) Make it fun. You do not need to do calisthenics, when dancing will fill the bill. Playing with your children can achieve your goals, as can walking with friends. Do you remember how much fun you had being active as a kid?

10) In public health, successful programs are often rewarded. Do the same for yourself. Include some form of self recognition when you reach your goal. It doesn't have to be expensive or include pounds of chocolate. A massage, for example, would be a great follow-up to a long string of workouts.

For a daily dose of inspirational messages to keep you on track with your health-related goals in 2009, sign up for FITNET. Written with an emphasis on staying physically active, FITNET is free from the Iowa Department of Public Health and reaches an estimated 350,000 readers worldwide. To subscribe, write to tlane@idph.state.ia.us and type "add" in the subject line.

Shigellosis cases rise rapidly in recent weeks

Iowa cases of shigellosis have increased significantly in the past few weeks. Almost 200 cases have been reported in 2008 (a 70 percent increase over the average number of cases for the past three years). *Shigella* infections are being reported in all areas of the state, including recent outbreaks in Northern and Eastern Iowa. Cases are evenly distributed across several age groups including 0-5, 6-18, and persons aged 24-64 years. Few cases have been reported in persons aged 18-24 years and over 64. This corresponds to children and their parents/caretakers being at most risk.

Shigella infections are characterized by diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps a day or two after exposure (which usually is due to eating contaminated food or transmission from one person to another). The diarrhea is often bloody and symptoms typically resolve in 5-7 days. Treatment for shigellosis is hydration and electrolyte replacement.

Antibiotics should only be used in severe cases and when necessary to prevent spread. Anti-diarrheal medications should not be used.

Transmission of *shigella* occurs easily since only 10-200 organisms are needed to cause disease. Therefore, all those ill with shigellosis should not attend child care or work in the food industry until two consecutive negative stools cultures are obtained. Suspect cases of shigellosis should be tested and if confirmed, reported to IDPH. Persons who develop symptoms after being exposed to a person with shigellosis should also be reported to public health. For more information on shigellosis, go to www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/common/pdf/epifacts/shigellosis.pdf (in Spanish www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/common/pdf/epifacts/shigellosis_spanish.pdf)

Influenza update

As flu season continues, Iowa is seeing sporadic activity dispersed across the state. One confirmed case was identified as influenza A(H1N1), however several more cases have been reported throughout the state and are being investigated.

Remember that it is not too late to get an influenza vaccine. The vaccine will provide protection against influenza and peak flu activity is still a few weeks away.

Nationally, antiviral resistance to oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) has been seen this influenza season in actively circulating flu A(H1N1) strains tested by CDC. Additional surveillance for influenza antiviral resistance is ongoing at CDC. To view interim guidelines on the use of antiviral medications, go to www2a.cdc.gov/HAN/ArchiveSys/ViewMsgV.asp?AlertNum=00279.

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

None.

Regular Friday EPI- Updates will restart on Friday, January 9, 2009.

CADE wishes everyone a happy and healthy New Year!

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