

EPI Update for Friday, March 13, 2009
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- ***Salmonella* and Easter chicks and ducklings**
- **Schools hit hard by late-season flu activity**
- **Recruitment for the Epidemiology Response Team**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

***Salmonella* and Easter chicks and ducklings**

Salmonella are a common cause of foodborne illness, but can also be spread to people by direct contact with animals that carry the bacteria, such as reptiles and birds.

Outbreaks of *Salmonella* infections have been linked to exposure to baby chicks and ducklings, and many of these outbreaks have occurred around Easter. Children can be at particular risk from these birds after they receive them as gifts, since they are less likely to wash their hands and have more frequent hand-to-mouth contact than adults.

Whether you raise chicks or ducklings as a source of food or keep them as pets, follow these steps to protect yourself and your family from illness:

- Do not let children less than five years of age or others at high risk handle poultry or items contaminated by poultry.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after handling poultry or their droppings.
- Do not eat or drink around poultry or their living areas.
- Do not let poultry live inside your home.
- Do not wash the birds' food and water dishes in the kitchen sink.

For more information visit, www.cdc.gov/healthypets/easter_chicks.htm.

Schools hit hard by late-season flu activity

Schools across Iowa are reporting high absence rates; more than 16 reported several consecutive days of absence due to illness that equaled or exceeded 10 percent of the total students enrolled. Despite the recent increase in activity in school-age children, the overall level of influenza activity for the state remains low. Vaccination is recommended even this late in the season and those who received the vaccine early in the fall will still be protected.

The following are some recommendations for schools and child care facilities with high rates of absence due to respiratory illness:

- **Inform parents.** Provide information to parents about illness present in your community and school. Encourage parents to keep children home from school for the duration of illness.
- **Step up cleaning protocols at schools and other facilities.** Clean more frequently and encourage hand washing. Utilize hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.
- **Limit student interaction.** When illness rates reach 10 percent or greater, schools should consider limiting interactions among students and

with other schools; for example, limiting school assemblies, joint class activities, and mentoring with students. Consider greater spacing between students as classroom size permits.

- **Continue these actions until after illness rates decline.**

Recruitment for the Epidemiology Response Team

IDPH is now recruiting additional members for the Epidemiology Response Team (EpiRT). The team is seeking people with public health, health care, community health, prevention, data management or data analysis skills to assist local health departments during outbreaks or emergency situations. People with these skills who are not presently working or those who are retired but would like to stay involved in public health response are encouraged to join. More information about the team can be found at www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/common/pdf/cade/epir_flyer.pdf.

For application materials, please contact CADE at (515) 242-5935. A training session for new volunteers will be held in mid May.

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

None

Have a healthy and happy week!

Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
Iowa Department of Public Health
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