

EPI Update for Friday, June 4, 2010
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Proper submission of animals for rabies testing to State Hygienic Lab (SHL).**
- **Which *E. coli* infections do I report?**
- **Traveling abroad this summer? Follow these tips for staying healthy on your next trip.**

Proper submission of animals for rabies testing to State Hygienic Lab (SHL)

It is critical that hospitals/medical care facilities ensure that specimens are packaged and transported properly when submitting specimens to SHL for rabies testing.

- Packaging requirements vary from animal to animal.
- Proper packaging instructions for all sizes of animals will soon be posted on the SHL website. Meanwhile, please call SHL for packaging guidance. During their normal working hours of Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., please call 319-335-4334. Outside normal working hours, call the main SHL phone number at 319-335-4500 and follow the directions for contacting the duty officer.

Transport of specimens for rabies testing can be done through the use of the SHL courier.

- If the courier has already been to your facility or if you do not have a daily courier pickup, please call SHL to inquire about a special pickup.
- If you are unable to have the specimen picked up by the courier, please use FedEx "priority" overnight. Do not use "standard" overnight delivery.

The SHL rabies staff is available 24 hours a day to answer questions about testing, packaging, and shipping. Call the numbers given for SHL above.

Please remember that SHL requests that only animals that expose humans be sent to SHL for testing. Animals that expose other animals can be tested at the Iowa State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. (During business hours, call 515-294-1950. After hours, call 515-290-1969.)

Which *E. coli* infections do I report?

Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) is a type of enterohemorrhagic *E. coli* (EHEC) bacteria that can cause illness ranging from mild intestinal disease to severe kidney problems. The most common of these in the U.S. is *E. coli* O157:H7. More than 100 other non-O157 strains exist but, O26, O45, O103, O111, O121 and O145 are among the most commonly seen. Any STEC *E. coli* (serogroups beginning with the letter O) are reportable in Iowa.

Common symptoms of STEC infection are bloody diarrhea, abdominal cramps and chills. In more severe cases, the patient may progress to develop other clinical syndromes such as hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS), which can result in renal failure and death. Thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura (TTP), a life-threatening multisystem

disorder, is another syndrome that can develop following a STEC infection. Both events are reportable to the state.

Traveling abroad this summer? Follow these tips for staying healthy.

Before you leave for an exotic foreign destination, talk with your doctor about how to stay healthy while traveling.

- Discuss any concerns about how your health could be impacted by the planned trip.
- Ask your doctor which vaccinations you should receive before you leave. Some destinations require proof of vaccination, so make sure that you have received a record of all vaccinations given.

If you have a health problem while traveling, call the local U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance in locating a local health care provider.

Contact your health insurance provider to learn the extent of your medical coverage outside the United States. Consider getting travel insurance if your health plan does not cover international travel. Carry your health insurance information with you at all times.

You should also consider taking the following along with you:

- Insect repellent
- Long sleeve shirts and layered clothing
- Hand sanitizer
- First aid kit
- Medications (in their original containers)

Finally, be aware of your surroundings to avoid injury. One of the most significant risks while in other countries is being involved in traffic accidents.

For additional information on travel safety visit wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

None.

Have a healthy and happy week!

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