

EPI Update for Friday, February 15, 2013
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Updates on Current Issues**
- **Send a Health-e-Card to your valentine**
- **In Defense of a Valentine's Day Staple**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Updates on Current Issues

Norovirus: Norovirus activity is continuing in Iowa and outbreaks can occur in any setting where people come together. Patients presenting with vomiting and diarrhea are more likely to be infected with norovirus than bacterial pathogens, but routine stool cultures will not detect norovirus. The State Hygienic Laboratory is the only laboratory in the state with the ability to test for norovirus. Person to person transmission is common, as norovirus is highly contagious. To prevent spread, remind patients to wash their hands frequently with soap and water (antibacterial hand gels are not effective against Norovirus) and stay home while ill with vomiting and diarrhea (and ideally 24 hours after symptoms stop). Ill persons should not prepare food for others while sick and for at least two-to-three days after symptoms stop.

Foodborne Toxin: A recent outbreak of vomiting has been linked to a toxin produced by *Staphylococcus aureus*. Outbreaks involving foodborne toxins often require both bacterial contamination and inadequate heating or cooling of food to allow toxin production. Heat will not destroy some toxins once they are present in food, so proper food handling is important both before and after cooking. *Staph* toxins are not transmittable person to person.

Send a Health-e-Card to your Valentine

Give the gift of health to you or someone you love on Valentine's Day and all year long. The CDC's Health-e-Cards are available at www.cdc.gov/family/valentine/ and address topics such as tobacco use, injury prevention, and heart health.

In Defense of a Valentine's Day Staple

Chocolate comes from cocoa beans which are high in flavanols. These abundant phenolic plant compounds have marked antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. (Keep in mind that overly processed chocolate -- most of the candy aisle -- often contains added sugar and saturated fatty acids, which offset cocoa's health benefits.) So stick with dark, flavanol-rich varieties, and don't eat too much!

Chocolate has been associated with:

- Reduced blood pressure
- Lower risk of stroke
- Positive effect on cholesterol levels

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

IDPH's Occupational Health & Safety Surveillance Program *2013 Stakeholder's Webinar* on March 4, 2013 from 9:30 a.m. to noon CDT. For more information visit www1.gotomeeting.com/register/576284097 or contact Kathy Leinenkugel at 800-972-2026 or kathy.leinenkugel@idph.iowa.gov .

Save the date; *Webinar: Role of the Laboratory in TB Diagnosis and Management* on Thursday, March 7, 2013 at noon. More information will be included in next week's EPI Update.

Have a healthy and happy week!

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Iowa Department of Public Health
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