

EPI Update for Friday, September 21, 2012
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Influenza testing algorithm for the 2012-2013 season**
- **Harvest health concerns from exposure to mold and dust in grain**
- **New websites to order educational materials at no cost**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Influenza testing algorithm for the 2012-2013 season

The State Hygienic Laboratory (SHL) and IDPH have updated the influenza testing algorithm for the 2012-2013 season. Please send the following specimens to SHL for testing:

- Laboratories using rapid antigen tests should send all positive specimens to the State Hygienic Laboratory (SHL) until three positive tests are confirmed by RT-PCR (or until otherwise instructed).
- Laboratories using molecular testing for influenza A or B should send ONE positive specimen to SHL each week for further characterization for surveillance purposes.
- Specimens from ALL hospitalized patients with influenza-like illness (rapid test negative or positive) should be sent to SHL for confirmatory testing.
- Contact IDPH or SHL for guidance in the event of an Influenza outbreak.

Please note: preferred specimen types are a nasopharyngeal swab (one swab) or a combined nasal plus throat swab (2 swabs in transport medium tube).

To view the entire testing algorithm, visit

www.idph.state.ia.us/IDPHChannelsService/file.ashx?file=A82B0DAA-110A-4A3B-A268-18863530DA83. For information on test kits and testing guidance from SHL, visit www.shl.uiowa.edu/services/influenza/

Harvest health concerns from exposure to mold and dust in grain

Grain dust is always a health concern for Iowa farmers and those working in the grain industry. Drought conditions this year may elevate human and animal health concerns because of increased dust and mold exposure. The drought has also created conditions favorable to the production aspergillus mold and associated aflatoxins.

Exposure to low levels of grain dust during normal working conditions often causes reactions that are a nuisance, such as a cough, sore throat, nose and eye irritation, or feeling stuffed up or congested. People with chronic breathing problems or asthma may experience more symptoms or asthma attacks when exposed to high dust and mold levels.

Many farmers are reporting "black mold" in their crops. This is usually saprophytic fungi – microorganisms that feed on dead plant material. Individuals with allergies or respiratory problems are encouraged to wear respiratory protection to reduce breathing in masses of spores. While tractors and combines with cabs may offer some protection, it may not be enough to prevent respiratory problems.

Exposures to moldy and dusty grain, especially large exposures, may also cause two specific medical conditions with similar symptoms. Both are reportable to IDPH:

- Farmer's Lung or Hypersensitivity Pneumonitis (FHP) – a fairly uncommon condition (one in 20 farmers) caused by a delayed allergic reaction to the dust. Repeated exposures can lead to permanent lung damage or limitations to work. A medical provider should be consulted.
- Organic Dust Toxic Syndrome (ODTS) – a more common toxic response to dust, molds, bacteria, or toxins in the grain dust. Recovery is usually in a few days, but a medical provider should be consulted.

IDPH has created a Q & A fact sheet available at www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/common/pdf/2012_harvest_fact_sheet.pdf. For more information regarding reportable environmental diseases and conditions, see www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/reportable_diseases.asp or call IDPH Environmental Health at 800-972-2026.

New websites to order educational materials at no cost

The Iowa Substance Abuse Information Center (ISAIC) clearinghouse continues to distribute posters, brochures, etc., produced by several IDPH programs. Materials that relate to infectious disease epidemiology, environmental health, human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), hepatitis, immunization, tobacco use prevention, and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) supplemental nutrition program are available. The materials and shipping are at no charge to you. Orders can be faxed to (866) 499-8846. Materials on HIV/AIDS, STDs and hepatitis can also be ordered at www.idph.state.ia.us/ImmTB/Products.aspx?prog=Imm&pg=Products.

For the Health Protection Clearinghouse, visit <http://healthclearhouse.drugfreeinfo.org>. For the ISAIC Store (SA and Problem Gambling), visit <http://isaicstore.drugfreeinfo.org/>.

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

Save the Date: 2012 Influenza Teleconference/Webinar, October 11, 2012, 12:00PM to 1:00PM. The target audience for this teleconference/webinar includes health care professionals, laboratories, hospitals, and school nurses.

Save the Date: The Iowa Department of Public Health, Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology will be holding a "Fall EPI Update" webinar on Wednesday, October 31st from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. The target audience for this webinar includes local public health and hospital infection prevention partners. Topics will include a review of 2011 disease trends and hot topics in 2012. Additional details will follow.

Have a healthy and happy week!

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