



News Time 2009

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIVISION

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

H1N1: Information for Food Services

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Hours:
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Monday – Friday

Do NOT Touch the T-Zone!

Mucous membranes
of your eyes, nose or
mouth are where
germs enter your
body!



**Spread the word,
not the germs!**

H1N1 is a novel influenza virus that is a subtype of Influenza A. It is a combination of respiratory viruses from pigs, humans and birds. It is spread from human to human through coughs and sneezes or by touching something with the virus on it and then touching the eyes, nose or mouth. Symptoms include a fever of 100° F. or more, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue and in some cases, vomiting and diarrhea.

Although H1N1 is not spread by eating pork, it is important for food service facilities to take the proper precautions to prevent the spread of the virus to employees and customers. During a pandemic, it is important to maintain a healthy work environment. You should already be practicing, even before H1N1, a policy where ill food handling employees are excluded from the workplace. Other employees, such as managers, wait staff and maintenance staff, should stay home if showing H1N1 flu symptoms. Frequent hand washing can prevent the spread of the virus by ensuring hands are not acting as a vehicle of transmission for the virus. Also, avoiding contact with the eyes, nose and mouth (the

T-Zone) will prevent the virus from being transferred to or from the hands. Because this respiratory disease can be spread through droplets in the air, avoid close contact with people that are sick as much as possible. Finally, promote proper respiratory hygiene, such as cough and sneeze etiquette. Sneeze and cough into the upper arm, rather than the hands or tissue. CUPHD has documents available that can be posted in your facility to inform employees about the H1N1 virus and how to stay healthy. For printable resources, go to www.c-uphd.org/H1N1-Flu.html.

Employers should take responsibility for informing employees about how to stay healthy. Openly communicating with employees about their health and hygiene habits is essential. Employees should be encouraged to stay home if they are ill. Employers should offer sick leave to employees and have back-up staff available when there are absences. With an open line of communication between employees and employers, all staff can be informed about how H1N1 is spread and what they can do to keep themselves, coworkers and customers healthy.

When an employee does become sick with H1N1 symp-

toms, they should inform their supervisor of the illness. This employee should be sent home or stay home. The employee should stay home until at least 24 hours after the 100° F. fever subsides. A sick individual should practice proper respiratory etiquette and hand washing techniques to prevent the further spread of the virus. Encourage your staff to be vaccinated once the vaccine is available.

It seems simple to prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus; however foodservice facilities have several hurdles that they must overcome in order to ensure all precautions are being taken. Many food service employees do not have medical insurance or paid leave time, which may prevent them from reporting an illness due to the threat of losing income. Proper hand washing and respiratory etiquette can be easily disregarded during busy periods. With seasonal flu or H1N1, everyone should do their best to stay healthy by eating nutritious foods, getting plenty of sleep and exercise, and practicing proper hygiene.

Remember, we want to achieve “Community Immunity.” Do your part!

Hepatitis A Outbreak in Northern Illinois: Lessons Learned

Earlier this summer, an estimated 10,000 patrons of a northern Illinois fast food restaurant were potentially exposed to Hepatitis A during the months of June and July. At least 20 cases of Hepatitis A were confirmed in five Illinois counties. This outbreak lasted more than three weeks and has cost the corporation a significant amount of money in preventative vaccines, hospitalizations and lawsuits.

Hepatitis A is a communicable disease caused from a virus that is spread primarily from fecal-oral contact. This virus is generally spread from person to person or via contaminated food or water, with food being the most common vehicle for the transmission of Hepatitis A. A food handler is most often the individual that contaminates food, although this person may not be symptomatic at the time of contamination. The virus is abundant in the stool of infectious individuals during

the two weeks prior to the onset of symptoms.

Despite being easily preventable, there are an estimated 76 million cases of foodborne illness each year in this country. This outbreak, serving potentially contaminated food to an estimated 10,000 people, could have been prevented or lessened in severity. The following are reasons the outbreak was as severe as it was:

- The primary infected employee and the healthcare provider did not promptly report the illness to the food service or the local health department. In the time prior to the reporting of the illness, a second employee became infected with the virus.
- The primary infected employee stated that after reporting the illness to the supervisor, they were allowed to continue working.

- If proper hygiene and food handling were taking place by the infected employees, the virus likely would not have been spread to patrons. It is likely the employees were not practicing proper hand washing and food handling techniques.

In conclusion, although illnesses are not uncommon in food service, the spreading of illness should be. Proper hand washing and food handling can prevent the majority of foodborne illness outbreaks. If employees are diagnosed with Hepatitis A, Norovirus, *E-coli*, *Salmonella* or *Shigella*, the local health department should be notified and the employee should stop working with food. Proper precautions should be followed in the workplace to prevent a foodborne illness outbreak of the magnitude of the Hepatitis A outbreak in northern Illinois.

Are You Prepared?

It is better to have a plan and no pandemic than a pandemic with no plan.

Stock 2 For Flu is a campaign for home preparedness. Help prepare yourself for a pandemic by stocking items that you might need if you and your family had to stay home for an extended period of time. You can build your stockpile a little at a time. Pick up two extra items whenever you go shopping for food, water, medicines or supplies. And keep building your stockpile until you have enough to support yourself, your family members and any pets for at least two weeks.

For checklists, contact lists and sample plans, visit the following website:

www.stock2forflu.com

Flu Hotline



The State of Illinois has opened a hotline for H1N1 flu questions. English and Spanish lines are open from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily. The hotline is staffed by professionals from the Illinois Emergency Management Agency and the Illinois Department of Public Health, as well as trained volunteers. The hotline can be reached at:

English: (866) 848-2094

Español (866) 241-2138

Websites

The National Restaurant Association's website has H1N1 information for restaurateurs:

<http://www.restaurant.org/fluinfo/>



See the Centers for Disease Control website for the latest flu information:

<http://cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>



Visit the H1N1 page at the Food & Drug Administration website at:

<http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/PublicHealthFocus/ucm150305.htm>



Visit Champaign County Prepares at:

<http://www.champcoprepares.com/>