



Epi Update for Friday, October 29, 2021

Office of the Public Health Medical Director
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Bureau of HIV, STD, and Hepatitis

Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's Epi Update include:

- **Melioidosis bacteria found in aromatherapy room spray, products sold in Iowa**
- **Congenital syphilis cases accelerating in Iowa**
- **2020 hepatitis C end-of-year report highlights**
- **CDC Food Safety Alert: Multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* linked to salami sticks**

Melioidosis bacteria found in aromatherapy room spray, products sold in Iowa

Testing at CDC has identified the bacterial DNA of *Burkholderia pseudomallei* in an aromatherapy room spray in the home of the Georgia resident who was infected with and died from *Burkholderia pseudomallei* infection (melioidosis) in July 2021. This Georgia patient was the fourth melioidosis case in a cluster since March 2021 that involved three other patients in Kansas, Minnesota, and Texas. Based on genomic analysis, the four cases closely match, indicating they all most likely share a common source of exposure.

The contaminated product is the Better Homes and Gardens-branded Essential Oil Infused Aromatherapy Room Spray with Gemstones "Lavender & Chamomile" scent, manufactured in India. The spray was sold at Walmart between February and October 21, 2021, and was distributed in a limited number of stores and online nationwide. Out of abundance of caution, the five other scents under the same brand were removed from Walmart marketplaces as well (Lemon & Mandarin, Lavender, Peppermint, Lime & Eucalyptus, and Sandalwood & Vanilla).

A total of 225 of the implicated items were sold in Iowa.

CDC advises not to throw away the bottles or dispose of them yourself. The bacteria that causes melioidosis does not occur naturally in the U.S. It can also live for a very long time in soil, water, and probably even landfills. People who may have this product in their homes are asked to return it to Walmart. Walmart is working with CDC to develop a plan to ensure the bottles will be safely handled and destroyed.

For more information, visit <https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/2021/han00455.asp>.

Congenital syphilis cases accelerating in Iowa

The upward trend of congenital syphilis cases has continued in Iowa. So far in 2021, nine cases have met the case definition for congenital syphilis. This equals the number of cases for the past 12 years combined. Several cases have involved persons who were not able to access prenatal care until later pregnancy or did not have adequate time to complete the CDC-recommended treatment regimen prior to delivery.

Congenital syphilis is a serious condition in which a pregnant person passes the infection on to their fetus or newborn. Some cases result in stillbirth or neonatal death. It can be averted if pregnant persons are diagnosed and treated early. All pregnant persons should be tested for syphilis in their first trimester at their first prenatal visit. Repeat testing at 28-32 weeks gestation is often advantageous as it can detect infection acquired during pregnancy. If pregnant persons present late for prenatal care, they should immediately be tested for syphilis. For those who have confirmed positive test results, treatment should begin immediately.

For questions regarding interpretation of syphilis serology tests or recommended treatment regimens, reach out to the Disease Intervention Specialist (DIS) assigned to your region or to George Walton, STD Program Manager at (515) 240-1143.

For more information about congenital syphilis, visit www.cdc.gov/std/syphilis/stdfact-congenital-syphilis.htm.

For complete STI treatment guidelines, visit www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/default.htm.

2020 hepatitis C end-of-year report highlights

In 2020, 825 people living in Iowa were diagnosed with chronic viral hepatitis C (HCV), a 30% decrease compared to 2019. The number of diagnoses in 2020 was well below the previous 5-year average of 1,502 diagnoses annually from 2015 to 2019. In total, there have been 27,675 Iowans ever reported with current or past Hepatitis C infection from 2000 to 2020, with 75% of the reported cases having evidence of chronic HCV.

Almost two-thirds (61%) of Iowans diagnosed with HCV in 2020 were males. When assessed by age group, diagnosis data showed Iowa continued to have a bi-modal distribution of hepatitis C infection, with the majority of cases being within the 'baby boomer' population (43%) and those under forty years of age (30%). The observed decline in new diagnoses of chronic Hepatitis C has primarily been among the baby boomer population, who are at high risk for complications from chronic Hepatitis C infection.

Unlike HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, there are no significant racial and ethnic disparities among Iowans diagnosed with HCV infection. Given the disparities seen in Iowa among other chronic diseases and infections, this lack of racial and ethnic disparities could indicate that minority populations may not have the same access to hepatitis testing and screening services. Additionally, the lack of disparity may also reflect the increased association of HCV with use of methamphetamines in Iowa.

To review the full *2020 Hepatitis C Surveillance Report*, visit <https://idph.iowa.gov/hivstdhep/hep/resources>.

CDC Food Safety Alert: Multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* linked to salami sticks

Citterio brand Premium Italian-Style Salame Sticks have been linked to 21 cases of salmonellosis from eight states. Currently, no cases have been identified in Iowa, but cases have been identified in neighboring states.

The product was sold at Trader Joe's and may be sold at other grocery stores. Consumers should not eat Citterio brand Premium Italian-Style Salame Sticks with any best-by date. Throw them away. Investigators are working to determine if additional products may be contaminated.

To view the full Food Safety Alert, visit www.cdc.gov/salmonella/i45-10-21/index.html.

Have a healthy and happy week!

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