



Epi Update for Friday, December 17, 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:

- **Omicron variants continue to be identified**
- **Know about norovirus: Prevent the spread**
- **Syphilis continues to increase in Iowa, more women affected**
- **Infographic: Protect yourself from norovirus**

Omicron variants continue to be identified

The Omicron variant has been identified in nearly every state, including Iowa. Eighteen Omicron variants have been identified in Iowa and additional confirmations are expected. Iowa, like other states across the nation, has identified Omicron variants in both international travelers and individuals without a history of travel; therefore, Iowans should expect that community spread of the Omicron variant is occurring.

For additional information about Omicron visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/omicron-variant.html>

Know about norovirus: Prevent the spread

IDPH and local public health partners have investigated six confirmed or suspected norovirus outbreaks in the past month. The winter season and the gatherings that are associated with it are a peak time of year for norovirus outbreaks.

Common symptoms of norovirus are nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal cramps. Noroviruses are most commonly spread by food contaminated with stool or by direct person-to-person spread. The virus can also be spread via objects contaminated with stool and by airborne spread when someone vomits. The illness usually lasts for a few days, and most recover completely with no long-term health effects. Dehydration is the most common cause of hospitalization with norovirus, so the most important thing to do while you are ill with norovirus is to keep drinking fluids.

Anyone who has diarrhea, vomiting, or fever should stay home while they are ill.

Hand washing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of norovirus and many other infectious diseases.

- Hand washing should be done using warm water and soap.

- Rub hands together for at least 15 seconds making sure to scrub the backs of hands, wrists, between fingers and under fingernails.
- Rinse well under warm water and dry.
- If soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

For more information about norovirus, visit <https://idph.iowa.gov/cade/disease-information/norovirus>.

Syphilis continues to increase in Iowa, more women affected

The number of infectious syphilis cases continues to climb in Iowa. Early 2021 data indicates that we have already exceeded the number of cases in all of 2020 by more than 25%. The 2021 data are still incomplete and the numbers will likely increase further.

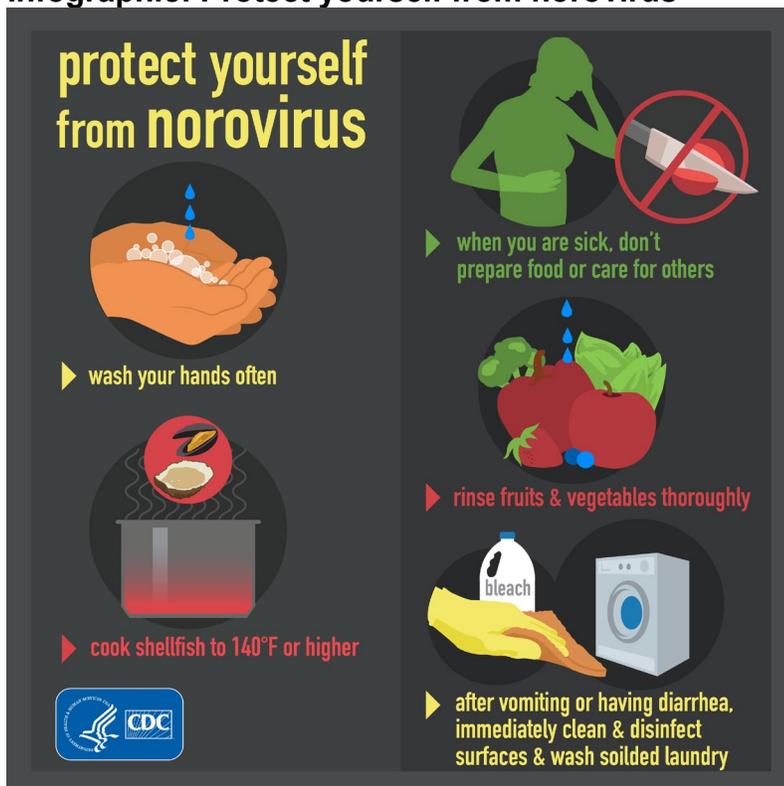
More populations are being affected by syphilis than in the past. In 2020, approximately 12% of diagnoses were among women. So far in 2021, the number of cases among women has more than doubled, and they now represent more than 20% of reported cases.

An even greater cause for concern is the number of congenital syphilis cases. Eleven cases met the case definition for congenital syphilis in 2021. This is compared to one in all of 2020. Congenital syphilis may result in stillbirth or neonatal death.

Medical providers are highly encouraged to test their patients for syphilis. Signs and symptoms of syphilis are sometimes confused with other conditions or may go unnoticed by patients.

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

Infographic: Protect yourself from norovirus



To view in full size, visit www.cdc.gov/norovirus/images/info-norovirus-poster.png.

Have a healthy and happy week!

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NOTE: There will be no Epi Update released next week due to the holidays.