

Microbe Monthly

Communicable Disease Report
 El Paso County Department of Health & Environment
 (EPCDHE) CD/TB Program

January 2008

Welcome to the Microbe Monthly! The original "El Paso County Monthly Communicable Disease Report" was launched in January 2002 to provide local healthcare providers with regular updates about happenings in communicable disease, as well as to maintain an active Health Alert Network (HAN) for emergency preparedness purposes. This new format is designed to allow more in-depth information on current topics of interest, while still providing brief updates on disease trends in the county and state. Readers are invited to contact us at 719-578-3220 with comments, suggestions or ideas.

Norovirus Season Is Here

With attention often focused on influenza this time of year, **norovirus** activity in the community sometimes is less noticed. EPCDHE has investigated several probable norovirus outbreaks in nursing homes since November (see EPC Disease Trends below) and more are likely to occur before winter's end. While individual cases of norovirus are not reportable in Colorado, group or facility outbreaks must be reported within 24 hours. During an outbreak, persons ill with norovirus may be subject to work-related restrictions, particularly in child care, patient care, and food handling, to prevent further spread of this highly contagious virus.

In the last 10 years, diagnosis of norovirus outbreaks has improved with the increasing use of reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR). Currently, 27 state public health laboratories (including the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE) laboratory and several commercial reference laboratories) have the capability to test for norovirus by this method. RT-PCR can be used to test both stool and emesis samples. Identification of the virus is most successful from specimens taken within 48 to 72 hours after onset of symptoms, although virus can sometimes be found in stool samples taken as late as two weeks after recovery.

Testing at CDPHE is reserved for selected outbreak investigations; routine clinical testing is not available at CDPHE. For more information on norovirus or to report possible outbreaks, contact our CD Program at 714-578-3220. For additional information visit the CDC's website:

www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub_norwalk.htm

El Paso County Disease Trends

- For the month of December 2007, 47 communicable disease cases were reported, including cases of **aseptic meningitis (2), campylobacter (2), cryptosporidium (1), giardia (5), Haemophilus influenzae (1), hepatitis B (4), influenza (5), malaria (1-foreign acquired), pertussis (6), salmonella (2), shigella (1), invasive strep pneumo (6) and varicella (11)**.
- Our CD Program investigated seven separate **pertussis** (whooping cough) outbreaks throughout the past year. As of the end of December, there were 54 confirmed or probable cases in El Paso County for 2007 (see trend chart at right).
- We also investigated three separate gastrointestinal illness outbreaks in long-term care facilities during November and December 2007; the likely cause of each being **norovirus**. These outbreaks have involved approximately 136 ill residents and staff.

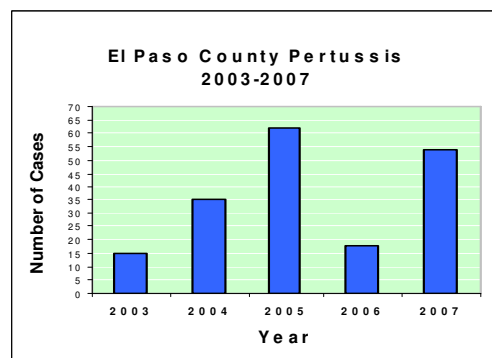
Hot topics—State and National

- In December 2007, Colorado saw an increase in **influenza** activity, moving from local to regional activity. The Front Range has seen the bulk of influenza hospitalizations thus far. The predominant strain to date has been Influenza Type A, subtype H1.
- Merck suspended production and **recalled PedvaxHIB and Comvax** Haemophilus Influenzae B conjugate (Hib) vaccines because the company cannot assure the sterility of equipment used during manufacture of specific lots. However, the potency of the vaccine in the recalled lots was not affected, and Merck reported that no contamination of vaccine has been detected. Therefore, children who received Hib conjugate vaccine from the recalled lots do not need revaccination or any special follow-up. Until supplies are reestablished, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that providers temporarily defer administering the routine Hib vaccine booster dose administered at ages 12-15 months, except for children in specific groups at high risk. Providers should register and track children for whom the booster dose is deferred to facilitate recalling them for vaccination when supply improves.

To Quote the Experts:

"Today, noroviruses are recognized as the most common cause of infectious gastroenteritis among persons of all ages. They are responsible for over 50% of all food-borne gastroenteritis outbreaks in the United States and are a major contributor to illness in nursing homes and hospitals. Noroviruses have been detected in 35% of persons with sporadic gastroenteritis of known cause and in 14% of all children under three years old hospitalized for gastroenteritis."

Marc-Alain Widdowson;
 Stephan S. Monroe; Roger I. Glass
 Emerg. Infect. Dis. 2005;
 11 (5): 735-737.



Contact Information

CD/TB Program	
Weekday Hours	719-578-3220
After Hours Emergency	719-385-9622
Immunizations	719-578-3272
Environmental Health	719-575-8636
STD Program	719-578-3148 (Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Hep C, HIV/AIDS, Blood-borne Exposures)
Colorado State Health Department	
Weekday Hours	303-692-2700
After Hours	303-370-9395