



Microbe Monthly

Communicable Disease Report

October 2008

El Paso County Department
of Health & Environment

Why Report Infectious Diseases?

Repeated budget cuts are putting a significant strain on Health Department resources and our ability to protect the public. Unfortunately, infectious diseases know no financial boundaries and are commonplace in our community. The public expects us to respond to disease threats with appropriate prevention and control measures. Last year alone, almost 500 infectious disease reports were received in El Paso County. Here are several reasons why prompt reporting of infectious diseases is essential:

Infectious diseases cross geographical borders. One seemingly innocuous case of respiratory illness in El Paso County may turn out to be a puzzle piece in a statewide or even nationwide outbreak. For example, when a case of active tuberculosis was identified in a local college student in 2007, public health agencies responded rapidly and methodically to prevent further infections by conducting an extensive contact investigation involving residents of 10 Colorado counties and 10 additional states.

Reporting helps stop outbreaks. When several people become ill after eating at a retail food establishment, locally or nationally, prompt follow-up may identify a contaminated food item that is still being served. Food safety inspectors implement immediate control measures, remove tainted food and provide training to food handlers to prevent future illness.

A prompt phone call can make a difference. While some notifiable diseases should be reported within 7 days of their detection, certain diseases require immediate phone notification to either the El Paso County Health Department's Communicable Disease Program or the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. There are 20 diseases or outbreak types that require urgent case investigation and follow-up — such as acute hepatitis A, *Neisseria meningitidis*, botulism, plague, measles, pertussis and TB. Prophylactic medication is available to contacts of infected persons to prevent further spread. The Health Department is responsible for coordinating contact investigations and assuring that life-saving medications are available. A list of reportable diseases is available online at:

www.cdphe.state.co.us/dc/Medlist.pdf

Enteric Disease in El Paso County

Gastrointestinal infections—such as those caused by *Campylobacter*, *Cryptosporidium*, *Giardia*, *Listeria*, *Salmonella*, Shiga-toxin producing *E. coli* and *Shigella*—are relatively common. Most people recover from these illnesses, but some suffer adverse outcomes. Between January 1, 2005 and September 30, 2008, 138 (21%) of reported enteric infections in El Paso County were hospitalized and 2 persons died from causes related to their infections. Both deaths occurred in 2008.

Adverse Outcomes of Enteric Infections, El Paso County, 2005-08 YTD

Pathogen	Number	Hospitalizations	Deaths
Campylobacter	186	37 (20%)	0
Cryptosporidium	30	7 (23%)	0
Giardia	164	7 (4%)	0
Listeria	2	2 (100%)	1
Salmonella	208	62 (30%)	0
Shiga-toxin producing <i>E. coli</i>	39	14 (36%)	1
Shigella	32	9 (28%)	0
TOTAL	661	138 (21%)	2 (0.3%)

El Paso County Disease Trends

- In September 2008, 47 communicable diseases were reported and investigated: *Campylobacter* (5), Cryptosporidiosis (3), *Giardia* (4), chronic Hepatitis B (5), invasive pneumococcal disease (4), Q fever (1), *Salmonella* (3), STEC (shiga-toxin producing *E. coli*) (5), *Varicella* (8) and viral meningitis (9).
- Also in September, the Communicable Disease Program received 5 possible foodborne illness complaints, bringing the year-to-date total to 119 complaints.
- Thus far in 2008, there have been 36 outbreaks reported: 8 influenza in long-term care facilities (LTCFs), 10 norovirus/gastrointestinal in LTCFs, 13 outbreaks associated with retail food establishments, 4 associated with schools and 1 in a home.

Hot Topics—State and National

- The State Health Department has issued revised recommendations for the collection of nasopharyngeal (NP) specimens for pertussis testing and has a Web link to a CDC video for NP swab collection. The main revision is a recommendation that the patient's head be tilted back for nasal wash specimen collection. These revisions are available online at: www.cdphe.state.co.us/dc/Epidemiology/Pertussis/pertussiscollection.pdf
- For the 2008-09 influenza season, there will be an estimated 145 million doses of influenza vaccine available. Vaccine shipments have begun and should continue into January. The CDC is now recommending that all children ages 6 months to 18 years be vaccinated, along with seniors, immune-compromised individuals, pregnant women and caretakers of these individuals. To find a flu vaccine clinic, visit the Colorado Influenza and Pneumococcal Alert Coalition (CIPAC) website: www.immunizecolorado.com or call 1-877-462-2911.

Contact Information

<u>CD/TB Program</u>	
Weekday Hours	719-578-3220
After-Hours Emergency	719-385-9622
<u>Immunizations</u>	
	719-578-3272
<u>Environmental Health</u>	
	719-575-8636
<u>STD Program</u>	
	719-578-3296
(Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Hep C, HIV/AIDS, Blood-borne Exposures)	
<u>Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment</u>	
Weekday Hours	303-692-2700
After Hours	303-370-9395