

Microbe Monthly

Communicable Disease Report

March 2009

El Paso County Department
of Health & Environment

Health Department International Travel Clinic Services: Consultations and Immunizations

Americans take millions of trips to international destinations each year – with a significant proportion of them to rural settings or developing countries. Some studies have estimated that 30 to 60 percent of overseas travelers become sick with diarrheal illnesses. Others may contract more harmful diseases while on vacation, including malaria and yellow fever. So whether one's destination is the Bahamas or Bangladesh, it is well worth the time for travelers to visit a travel health clinic before their departure.



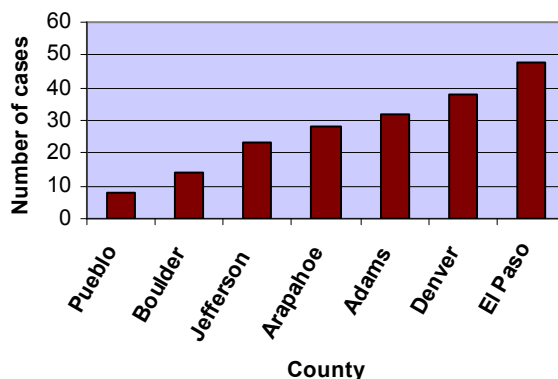
Travelers seen in the International Travel Clinic at the El Paso County Department of Health and Environment (EPCDHE) have an opportunity to meet with a public health nurse who will assess their destination, length of stay, itinerary and previous medical history. This assessment results in the development of a travel care plan customized to the traveler's individual health needs. The plan may include referrals to the traveler's primary care provider to receive prescriptions for anti-malarial drugs and other medications. EPCDHE's Travel Clinic provides the traveler with required and/or recommended immunizations based on their destination, as well as educational materials regarding preventive behaviors to avoid travel-related health and safety problems. The thrust of this education focuses on food and water safety, recommendations for avoiding insect-borne diseases and the importance of seeking post-travel care from their primary care provider in the event the traveler experiences health problems upon their return.

Travelers are encouraged to schedule an appointment 3 to 12 weeks in advance of their trip. This time frame will ensure that the traveler has enough time to develop immunity from vaccines administered prior to travel, to allow for booster immunization for selected vaccines and to begin a malaria regimen, if needed, prior to departure. The EPCDHE International Travel Clinic is available by phone to help answer questions that health care providers or patients may have if they are considering international travel. We can be reached at 719-578-3272 or online at www.elpasocountyhealth.org.

El Paso County Disease Trends

- In February 2009, 62 communicable diseases were reported and investigated: *Campylobacter* (3), *Giardia* (4), *Haemophilus influenza* (2), acute hepatitis B (1), chronic hepatitis B (7), influenza-related hospitalizations (20), invasive pneumococcal disease (4), Kawasaki syndrome (1), *Salmonella* (3), shiga-toxin producing *E. coli* (1), *Varicella* (11) and viral meningitis (5).
- Also in February, the Communicable Disease Program received 12 possible foodborne illness complaints.
- There were 4 gastrointestinal illness (GI) outbreaks reported in February: 1 norovirus outbreak in a rehab setting; 1 unknown GI agent in a long-term care facility (LTCF); and 2 unknown GI agents in military settings.
- Colorado continued to report "widespread" flu activity in February, with El Paso County leading the state in number of cases (see chart).

Colorado Hospitalized Influenza Cases by County, Oct 2008 - Feb 2009



Hot Topics — State and National

- Group B *Streptococcus* (GBS) is a leading infectious cause of neonatal morbidity and mortality in the U.S. A 2007 report indicated that during 2003 – 2005, the overall rate of early-onset GBS increased, whereas incidence of late-onset GBS disease remained stable. This report was updated by incorporating 2007 data from a population-based surveillance system, which revealed an increase in the overall rate of early-onset GBS disease from 2003 to 2006, driven by an increasing incidence among black, full-term infants. The full report is available at: www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5805a2.htm.
- Colorado has linked cases of *S. Typhimurium* from the national peanut butter outbreak associated with Peanut Corporation of America to Vitamin Cottage's fresh "in store" ground peanut butter. Seven of 18 Colorado cases reported eating this type of peanut butter, which was made with peanuts supplied from Peanut Corporation of America's Texas plant—marking the first time this plant has been implicated in the national outbreak.

Contact Information

CD/TB Program

Weekday Hours (M-Th)* 719-578-3220
After-Hours Emergency 719-385-9622

Immunizations

719-578-3272

Environmental Health

719-575-8636

*Note: Health Department regular hours are Monday—Thursday, 7 AM—6 PM.

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Weekday Hours (M-F) 303-692-2700
After Hours 303-370-9395