



ALLEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

---November/December 2008---

At a glance facts:

Year to Date Statistics
(As of October 31, 2008)

- **Immunizations given: 11,976**
- **Child Health Clinic visits: 420 (closed May 2008)**
- **Family Planning Program visits: 5,580**
- **HIV Tests given: 1,121**
- **Tuberculosis Tests given: 1,280**
- **Reportable Communicable Diseases: 1,383 total**
 - 0 cases of Class A1 diseases**
Diseases of major public health concern needing immediate response, e.g. human rabies, meningococcal disease
 - 50 cases of Class A2 diseases**
Diseases of public health concern needing timely response, e.g. E.coli 0157:H7, West Nile Virus, TB
 - 699 cases of Class A3 diseases**
Diseases of significant public health concern, e.g. STD's, Foodborne illnesses
 - 601 cases of Class B diseases**
Diseases tracked for trending purposes, e.g. influenza (flu), chicken pox
 - 33 cases of Class C diseases**
Diseases of concern when seen in multiples, e.g. scabies and staph infections
- **Number of births filed: 2,244**
- **Number of deaths filed: 1,142**
- **WIC Supplemental Nutrition Program monthly average caseload: 4,094**
- **Environmental Division Field Inspections: 8,048**

Disease Investigation – A Team Effort

One of the essential duties of public health is to investigate infectious disease outbreaks, which includes foodborne illnesses. Foodborne illness is caused by harmful bacteria, viruses, parasites or chemicals that are found in food and beverages and enter the body through the gastrointestinal tract.

Since these investigations involve both sick people and food handling issues, the Allen County Health Department uses a TEAM approach. The TEAM is comprised of sanitarians and nurses who investigate reported illnesses to identify the exact problem, how it was spread, and what needs to be done to prevent more people from becoming ill. Most of the time, an investigation begins when a medical lab or hospital alerts us that the blood or stool sample of an area patient has tested positive for one of more than 50 listed agents and diseases, including Salmonella, Giardia, E. coli 0157:H7, Cryptosporidium, and Norovirus.

Harmful bacteria, for example, need the right conditions to “move in” and multiply in food to cause illness. Some of the potential sources of bacteria include playing with pets and then eating or handling food, keeping food at room temperature too long, and cross contamination from improper hand washing or using utensils on multiple foods without washing them in between uses.

Once the TEAM identifies a potential source of the illness, they go directly to “containment mode”, gathering information, and making recommendations to the person who is sick, along with family and immediate contacts, about steps they can take to reduce the risk of spreading the disease. The TEAM compares the reports they’ve seen, looking for patterns and any sign of an outbreak. Outbreaks occur when several people are sick and the source of illness can be linked. For example, a “once a year” family gathering might be a way for an outbreak to get started.

Communicable disease and foodborne investigations and education can keep these infectious diseases from becoming county-wide threats. Allen County’s “Outbreak Prevention Team” is often the last line of defense against the countless trillions of dangerous germs out there.

Protect Yourself

Safe food handling involves four steps:

- **Clean** - wash hands, utensils, cutting boards and countertops often.
- **Separate** – keep raw meat, poultry and seafood away from foods that won’t be cooked.
- **Cook** – use a thermometer and cook foods to the proper temperature.
- **Chill** – leftovers within 2 hours.



Communicable Disease Stats

These are just some of the more common communicable disease agents our TEAM investigates and the number of cases we've had over the past several years. Notice that many of the symptoms and possible sources of infection are very similar. One of the most important sources of infection is the person who is sick - they can easily spread the germs through poor hygiene. This is just another reminder of the importance of education and good hygiene – for both sick and healthy individuals.

Salmonella

- Symptoms may include abdominal pain, diarrhea, chills, fever, nausea, vomiting, and malaise
- Possible sources of infection: meat, poultry, eggs or pets, especially reptiles such as turtles and lizards

2006	2007	2008 (YTD)
22	9	11

Campylobacter

- Symptoms may include abdominal pain, often severe bloody diarrhea, headache, fever, and malaise
- Possible sources of infection: raw poultry, raw beef or liver

2006	2007	2008 (YTD)
18	6	10

Giardia

- Symptoms may include diarrhea, gas, nausea, stomach cramps, and greasy stools that tend to float
- Possible sources of infection: soil, food, water, or surfaces that have been contaminated with the feces from infected humans or animals. Giardia is often spread through recreational water, e.g. swimming areas

2006	2007	2008 (YTD)
9	11	19

E. coli 0157:H7

- Symptoms may include bloody diarrhea, vomiting, dehydration, kidney and heart involvement/failure
- Possible sources of infection: beef or raw milk, and produce contaminated by raw beef or animal waste

2006	2007	2008 (YTD)
5	3	3

WIC Warming Up Kids with More Than Good Nutrition



The Allen County WIC staff is once again helping the children who come through their doors stay warm and healthy through the winter months by providing a “Mitten Tree” in the office. Health Department staff and friends of WIC donate new hats, gloves/mittens, and socks to the WIC program. These items are then displayed on and around a tree in the WIC clinic. When children come for their WIC appointment they or their parents can choose an item from the tree to take home. Smiles are shared by all.

WIC is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. WIC helps income eligible pregnant and breastfeeding women, women who recently had a baby, infants and children up to five years of age who are at health risk due to inadequate nutrition.

Top Health Educator Award



Kathy Luhn, our Director of Health Education, was presented the Outstanding Health Educator Award from the Ohio Society for Public Health Educators (Ohio SOPHE) in October. Award criteria included membership in Ohio SOPHE,

leadership roles in professional organizations, volunteer health-related services, community or civic activities and professional papers or publications. Development and/or origination of new health education programs or projects or those with a health education component were also considered, along with area or state recognition.



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