

The Pump Handle



"I had an interview with the Board of Guardians of St. James's parish, on the evening of Thursday, 7th September, and represented the above circumstances to them. In consequence of what I said, the handle of the pump was removed on the following day."

John Snow, 1855

October 2006 Topics

- Influenza Activity and Vaccine Update
- Shigellosis Update
- North Dakota Immunization Forums
- Chickenpox Outbreaks



Influenza Activity and Vaccine Update

The influenza season in North Dakota typically runs from October until May. Four laboratory-identified influenza cases have been reported to the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) as of Oct. 26, 2006. The best time to get vaccinated is in October and November. Since the peak influenza season usually does not occur until after the New Year, getting your flu shot in December or later can be beneficial. **It is never too late to get the flu shot!**

This year, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates a total of 115 million doses of flu vaccine will be available nationwide, and 75 million of those doses will have been distributed by the end of October. Therefore, anyone who wants to protect themselves and those around them from the flu can get vaccinated this year. Call your local public health unit or health-care provider to check for vaccine availability.

To see if there is a vaccine clinic in your area or to register a clinic, visit www.flucliniclocator.org.

For more information about influenza or to order educational materials, visit the NDDoH influenza website at www.ndflu.com.



Shigellosis Update

As of Oct. 30, 2006, 179 cases of shigellosis have been reported in North Dakota since July 1, 2006. Seventeen North Dakota counties have reported cases of *Shigella*; almost half of the cases were reported from Rolette County. One hundred and twenty-four cases (almost 70 percent) are children younger than 10. Information gathered during patient interviews indicates primarily person-to-person transmission.

If diagnosed with shigellosis, health-care workers, food handlers, and children and staff of day-care centers should stay home until diarrhea has ceased and two consecutive stool cultures (taken at least 24 hours following completion of antibiotic treatment and collected at least 24 hours apart) test negative for the bacteria.

For information about shigellosis and North Dakota statistics, visit www.health.state.nd.us/disease/Shigella/default.htm or call 701.328.2378. To report a possible infection, call 800.472.2180.



North Dakota Immunization Forums

Immunization stakeholders were invited to attend the North Dakota Immunization Forums that were held in six North Dakota cities in October 2006. Legislators, insurance companies, vaccine manufacturers, family practice physicians, pediatricians, local public health units, Medicaid Services, Department of Public Instruction personnel, Healthy North Dakota members, the Governor's Office and Senators Conrad and Dorgan and Representative Polmeroy were among those who were invited.

The NDDoH is at a strategic point for planning and decision making regarding immunizations. In the past, the NDDoH supplied all recommended vaccinations to providers throughout the state to immunize all North Dakota children. The NDDoH Immunization Program currently is facing both reduced funding and increases in the recommended number of vaccinations and associated costs, affecting its ability to supply vaccine at no cost as it was able to do in the past. Because of this, decisions need to be made regarding the future of the NDDoH Immunization Program. Immunization rates in North Dakota are remaining stable, instead of increasing. It is important that immunization stakeholders throughout the state address these important issues.

The meetings were facilitated by the NDDoH and local public health units. Anticipated outcomes for the forums were:

- Determine whether or not and how the NDDoH will continue to supply vaccines to all children in North Dakota.
- Identify possible strategies to increase immunization rates.
- Identify four people from each region to participate in a North Dakota Immunization Strategic Planning Meeting in the near future.

For more information, contact the NDDoH Immunization Program at 701.328.2378.



Chickenpox Outbreaks

Since Oct. 3, 2006, three outbreaks of varicella* (chickenpox) in schools have been reported to the NDDoH. A school in Ward County reported eight cases, a school in Steele County reported three cases and a school in Bottineau County reported 10 cases. Three cases of varicella reported during the same time frame were not associated with an outbreak. Of the

24 cases reported, only seven had a history of one dose varicella vaccination in the North Dakota Immunization Information System.

To best achieve immunity for varicella, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends two doses of varicella vaccine be given to all children (first dose given at ages 12 to 18 months and the second dose given at ages 4 to 6 years). Children who have one dose should be given a second dose to be considered immune. Children in day cares must have a dose of varicella vaccine at ages 12 to 18 months and children entering kindergarten through second grade need to have at least one dose of varicella vaccine.

During a varicella outbreak, varicella vaccine, if administered within 72 hours (or as long as 120 hours) following exposure, may prevent disease or decrease its severity. A child without a history of vaccination should be vaccinated according to ACIP recommendations. A child with a history of only one dose should receive a second dose. These measures may help control the outbreak.

***All cases of varicella are reportable to the NDDoH. Call 800.472.2180 to report a case of varicella.**

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The pump handle picture in the title was obtained from the website www.ph.ucla.edu/epi/snow.html.



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