

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

April 2008 Topics

- Influenza Season Coming to a Close
- West Nile Virus/Arboviral Season Approaches
- Meningococcal Cases in North Dakota
- Food Safety Awareness
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Influenza Season Coming to a Close

The number of influenza cases reported to the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is continuing to decrease. Influenza activity in North Dakota reached its peak for the 2007-2008 season during the week ending March 1, 2008. As of April 26, 2008, a total of 3,741 influenza cases have been reported to the NDDoH so far this season. As indicated in the table below, influenza type A is the predominant type reported this season, accounting for 2,471 of the total cases.

Type	A			B	Unspecified A or B
	H1	H3	Unk.		
No. Cases	14	3	2,454	1,180	90

The NDDoH influenza website is updated weekly with the latest influenza data. For more information about influenza and the surveillance program, visit the NDDoH influenza website at www.ndflu.com.



West Nile Virus (WNV)/Arboviral Season Approaches

As warmer weather approaches, the North Dakota Department of Health is reminding people to take precautions against mosquito bites. Most arboviral infections are spread by bites from infected mosquitoes. Symptoms range in severity from mild flu-like illness to more severe

neurological disease such as encephalitis; however, most people infected do not develop symptoms.

In North Dakota, the most common disease transmitted by mosquitoes is West Nile virus. Since 2002, there have been a total of 1,246 cases of WNV reported to the state health department. Other arboviral diseases that can occur in the state include, western equine encephalitis and St. Louis encephalitis.

The *Culex tarsalis* mosquito is the primary vector for WNV infection in North Dakota. People can help reduce their chance of being bitten by mosquitoes by wearing insect repellent when outdoors and wearing light-colored, long-sleeved shirts and pants. Mosquitoes need water to breed. Help reduce mosquito breeding grounds by emptying standing water, keeping grass short and shrubbery trimmed, and removing tires and other debris that can hold water from around the house.

For more information, contact the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180 or visit the WNV website at www.ndhealth.gov/wnv.



Meningococcal Cases in North Dakota

In March and April, three cases of *Neisseria meningitidis* were reported to the North Dakota Department of Health. The cases included two adults and one child residing in Stutsman, McLean and Cass Counties respectively. There have been no associations among the cases established. Two of the cases of meningococcal were group B and one was group Y. All were susceptible to the antibiotics tested, including ciprofloxacin. The three cases were hospitalized, treated and released. The NDDoH worked with hospitals, day-care providers and local public health officials to ensure that all close contacts received appropriate prophylactic treatment.

Meningococcal meningitis is spread by direct contact through the respiratory droplets from the nose and mouth of infected people. Some people carry the bacteria in their nasal passages but do not get sick, yet they can still spread the bacteria to others. The incubation period for meningococcal disease may range from one to 10 days, but usually occurs less than four days after exposure. Prophylactic antibiotics will clear this carrier state. Two meningococcal vaccines are available in the United States. Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (Menactra) starting with the 2008-2009 school year will be required for adolescents ages 11 and 12 entering middle school. This vaccine is also routinely recommended for unvaccinated adolescents age 11 through 18. Meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine (Menomune) should be used for people at increased risk for meningococcal disease when meningococcal conjugate vaccine is unavailable or for individuals ages 55 and older. Neither vaccine protects against group B meningococcal disease.

For more information about meningococcal meningitis, visit www.ndhealth.gov/Immunize/Disease/Meningococcal.htm.



Food Safety Awareness

Incidence of infections associated with foodborne illnesses increase in the summer. Since summertime is when many people enjoy backyard barbecues, picnics or dinners around a campfire, it is important to remind people of proper handling and preparation of food to prevent illnesses this summer.

The following tips can help keep summertime food safe:

- Always wash your hands before preparing food, after handling raw foods and before eating. If warm running water and soap are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Keep cold foods – such as sliced fruits and vegetables, cold salads and meat trays – cold. During summer picnics, it is important to pack a refrigerator thermometer in your cooler to ensure the food in the cooler is kept at 40 degrees F or below.
- Cook foods properly. Cook meat to proper internal temperatures.
 - Poultry breasts to 165 degrees F
 - Ground beef to 155 degrees F
 - Pork and fish to 145 degrees F
- Wash fruits and vegetables before slicing and serving.
- Use pasteurized egg products for items not cooked thoroughly, such as homemade ice cream and raw cookie dough.
- Do not drink unpasteurized milk.

Some foodborne illnesses – including norovirus, hepatitis A, shigella and *E. coli* – also can be spread easily in contaminated water and from direct contact with infected people. For that reason, people who have diarrhea should not go swimming, work as food handlers or in a health-care setting, or attend day care. Prompt identification and reporting from physicians and laboratories are necessary to prevent the illness from spreading. Notify your local or state public health department for more information if any cases are identified associated with these risk factors.

For more information or to report a possible foodborne illness, contact Julie Goplin, North Dakota Department of Health, at 800.472.2180.



New STD/Hepatitis Program Manager

The North Dakota Department of Health Division of Disease Control has named Julie Goplin as the new program manager for the Sexually Transmitted Disease and Hepatitis Program. She has been with the department for more than five years, where she has coordinated the foodborne/enteric illnesses as well as syndromic surveillance. Congratulations, Julie, on your new position!

To contact Julie, call 701.328.2378 or toll free (North Dakota residents only) at 800.472.2180

Contributing authors of The Pump Handle include Michelle Feist, Abbi Pierce, Julie Goplin, Tracy Miller and Kirby Kruger. For questions, suggestions or inquiries, or to be removed from the mailing list, please contact Julie Goplin of the Division of Disease Control at 701.328.2375 or by email at jgoplin@nd.gov.

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



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