

EpiCenter

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Viral Meningitis A Pain In The Neck

In late March, several emergency room physicians reported to the Palm Beach County Health Department Division of Epidemiology & Disease Control that they had seen an increased number of viral meningitis cases. In April we initiated increased surveillance. A letter was sent to hospital infection control practitioners (ICPs), alerting them of the outbreak and requesting that they report all cases of viral meningitis to the Division of Epidemiology & Disease Control. Individual cases of viral meningitis are not reportable in Florida. Outbreaks of viral meningitis however, are reportable.

A letter from Palm Beach County School Health Program was sent to public schools advising teachers, parents, and students of the outbreak. A fact sheet was included, which emphasized the importance of handwashing in pre-

venting the spread of the virus. The fact sheet was also sent to the media for newspaper and television coverage of the outbreak.

By the end of May, an increased number of viral meningitis cases had been reported and tracked. The cases were distributed throughout Palm Beach County, with an increased number reported from the Glades area. There were no clusters noted by zip code or school. The ages of those diagnosed ranged from 3 weeks to 78 years. Half of the reported cases were school age children between the ages of 4 and 17.

Special thanks goes to the hospital ICPs for their diligence in carrying the burden of increased reporting during the outbreak. Only with their cooperation could the Palm Beach County outbreak be successfully managed.

CCC Takes Bites Out Of Malaria



The Coalition on Cultural Communication (CCC) was established in October 2003 after the health department realized that efforts to communicate with the Hispanic populations of Palm Beach County, during the malaria outbreak, were not effective. The coalition therefore focused on developing educational programs in which to communicate important messages regarding health, safety, and access to health care for immigrant populations and populations whose primary language is not English.

To accomplish this objective, the coalition is divided into five committees: outreach/key leaders, health education materials, access to healthcare, environmental concerns, and train-the-trainer. Malaria within the Hispanic community was chosen to be the first issue to be addressed. Thus far the coalition has had four meetings and has participation from 50 organizations within Palm Beach County. The coalition has also developed mosquito bite prevention educational materials that were reading level appropriate, conducted focus groups regarding educational materials, identified and communicated with key community leaders to further educate the community, identified barriers to access healthcare, and identified resources to assist with environmental concerns.

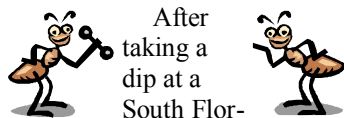
In the upcoming months, the coalition hopes to broaden membership and encourage consistent participation through communication, develop more reading level appropriate educational materials, and develop a multilingual video regarding mosquito bite prevention. The next meeting will be July 14th from 2 to 4pm at the Palm Beach County Library on Summit Blvd. If you are interested in participating on this committee, please call Khalia Hill at the Palm Beach County Health Department, (561) 840-4566.

WANTED: CONTACT INFO

Please e-mail or snail-mail us your current contact information (address, phone, fax, & e-mail) to attn: Denise Pagán. We would love to keep in touch!!!



Are Those Ants In My Pants?



After taking a dip at a South Florida ocean beach this summer, you may feel like you have ants in your pants. The good news is they aren't ants! The bad news is it is a skin irritation caused by microscopic jellyfish larvae, commonly known as "sea lice." Sea lice are typically found in South Florida waters from March to August, with the season peaking in May.

Affected ocean bathers report red welts and blotches, which are concentrated under the swimsuit and other parts of the body after swimming in the ocean. Itching and redness usually occur several hours after ocean bathing. Some experience a slight prickling sensation while they are in the water. It has been observed that pressure on the skin, as from a tight bathing suit, may trigger sea lice. Itching usually lasts 2-4 days, but can last as long as 2 weeks. Some people may have more severe reactions: headache, fever, nausea, and infected blisters. Children may develop high fever.

In order to prevent a sea lice attack it is recommended that you do not swim when sea lice are present, especially if you have been affected in the past. Secondly, make sure your bathing suit is removed before showering.

If you become affected by sea lice, an oral antihistamine, such as Benadryl, may help to relieve the itching. Also, an over-the-counter topical 1% cortisone skin cream or sting aid can be used. Always follow the dosage and application directions before using the above-mentioned medications.

You can check beach conditions by calling (561) 624-0065 for north county beaches and (561) 276-3990 for south county beaches.

PALM BEACH COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT REPORTED COMMUNICABLE DISEASES WEEK 22 (ENDING DATE 06/05/04)

This Week	This Year	Same Time Last Year
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CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM AND INVASIVE DISEASES:

Haemophilus influenzae primary bacteremia	1	13	7
Haemophilus influenzae meningitis	0	0	0
Haemophilus influenzae pneumonia	0	0	2
Meningococcal disease	0	2	3
Group B Streptococcus meningitis	0	0	0
Listeriosis	0	0	1
Streptococcus pneumoniae meningitis	0	0	0
Streptococcus pneumoniae invasive disease, drug-resistant	0	21	17
Streptococcus pneumoniae invasive disease, susceptible	0	18	0
Streptococcal disease, invasive Group A	0	7	6
Bacterial meningitis, other	0	6	6
Encephalitis, West Nile Virus	0	0	0
Encephalitis, other	0	0	1

VACCINE PREVENTABLE DISEASES:

Congenital rubella syndrome	0	0	0
Rubella (German measles)	0	0	0
Rubeola (measles)	0	0	0
Mumps	0	0	0
Pertussis	0	0	1
Tetanus	0	1	0

HEPATITIS:

Hepatitis A	1	7	10
Hepatitis B, acute	1	19	17
Hepatitis B, chronic	13	143	112
Hepatitis B (HBsAg+) in pregnant women	0	34	27
Hepatitis B, perinatal	0	0	0
Hepatitis C, acute	0	0	0
Hepatitis C, chronic	0	377	70

ENTERIC DISEASES:

Giardiasis	1	17	32
Campylobacteriosis	0	25	40
Shigellosis	3	32	44
Salmonellosis	5	83	80
Cryptosporidiosis	0	0	1
Cyclosporiasis	0	1	0
Typhoid fever	0	0	1
Enterohemorrhagic E. coli (EHEC) O157:H7	0	0	0
E. coli shiga toxin + (serogroup non-O157)	0	0	4
E. coli shiga toxin + (not serogrouped)	0	0	0
Vibrio cholera 01	0	0	0
Vibrio cholera non-01	0	0	0
Vibrio fluvialis	0	0	0
Vibrio alginolyticus	0	1	0
Vibrio vulnificus	0	1	1
Vibrio parahaemolyticus	0	0	2
Vibrio, other	0	0	1

OTHER DISEASES:

Human exposure to a potentially rabid animal	0	45	38
Animal rabies	0	12	9
Monkey bite	0	1	0
Pesticide-related illness or injury	0	0	0
Brucellosis	0	0	0
Ciguatera	0	0	0
Lead poisoning	0	32	49
Legionellosis	1	3	6
Lyme disease	0	0	1
Malaria	0	2	5
Mercury poisoning	0	0	0
Psittacosis	0	0	0
Q fever	0	0	1
Rocky mountain spotted fever	0	0	0
Toxoplasmosis	0	2	2