



# Public Health Messages

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services  
September 16, 2015

***Public Health Messages*** is a new way for the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) to provide information and guidance to medical providers and hospitals on current issues relating to medical care and public health. It is sent out through the Missouri Health Notification System (MOHNS), and goes to the same individuals and facilities that receive DHSS Health Alerts and Health Advisories. ***Public Health Messages*** does not replace Health Alerts and Health Advisories, but rather provides an additional way for DHSS to communicate, in the form of brief messages, with providers and hospitals.

## **Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)**

Healthcare providers and public health officials should continue to consider the possibility of MERS-CoV infection in ill persons who traveled from countries in or near the Arabian Peninsula within the previous 14 days.

As of September 15, 2015, a global total of 1,542 cases have been reported, including 544 (35%) deaths. Almost 80 percent of the cases have occurred in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). KSA is experiencing an unexpected increase in cases which began in August, mainly due to a large, ongoing nosocomial outbreak in a Riyadh hospital. Outbreaks in the Republic of South Korea (May 2015, 186 cases) and Jordan (ongoing, 11 cases to-date) resulted from infected persons traveling from KSA to those countries with subsequent nosocomial spread.

Sporadic cases among travelers returning to the U.S. from KSA or surrounding countries are possible, and would be associated with a risk of nosocomial transmission. This highlights the need for awareness among healthcare providers, early detection, and preparedness planning. Healthcare providers and facilities should carefully adhere to recommended infection control measures, including standard, contact, and airborne precautions, while managing suspected or confirmed MERS patients. Current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for evaluation of suspect cases is found at <http://health.mo.gov/emergencies/ert/alertsadvories/pdf/cdCHAd61115.pdf>.

Any suspect case should immediately be reported to the local public health agency (LPHA), or to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) at 573/751-6113 or 800/392-0272 (24/7). Information on MERS is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/index.html>. Questions should be directed to DHSS' Bureau of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention at 573/751-6113 or 800/392-0272.

## **Continued Vigilance Urged for Cases of Acute Flaccid Myelitis (AFM)**

CDC is continuing to receive and investigate sporadic reports of acute flaccid myelitis (AFM). At this time, CDC has verified reports of 120 children in 34 states who developed AFM. Almost all were hospitalized, and most presented with acute onset of areflexic limb weakness, usually following a respiratory or febrile illness.

The apparent increase in cases of AFM in 2014 coincided with a national outbreak of severe respiratory illness among children caused by enterovirus D68 (EV-D68). However, despite this close association in timing, a cause for the 2014 AFM cases has not been determined and, to date, despite extensive testing of patients' CSF, no specific pathogen has been consistently detected.

It is unclear if an increase of AFM could occur again this year. Therefore, continued vigilance and testing of specimens are needed to help clarify a cause and determine the frequency of AFM. Clinicians are urged to report cases of known or suspected AFM to the LPHA, or to DHSS at 573/751-6113 or 800/392-0272 (24/7).

For more information and guidance, including specimen collection, see the recent CDC *Notice to Clinicians* at <http://www.emergency.cdc.gov/coca/reminders/2015/2015aug27.asp>. Questions should be directed to DHSS' Bureau of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention at 573/751-6113.

### Heartland Virus Disease Investigation

Heartland virus is a newly identified phlebovirus first isolated from two northwestern Missouri farmers hospitalized with fever, leukopenia, and thrombocytopenia in 2009. The virus was suspected to be transmitted by ticks, and later was found in the Lone Star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*). For more information on the disease, see <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6312a4.htm> and <http://www.cdc.gov/ncezid/dvbd/heartland/>.

Mercy Hospital in Springfield and Mosaic Life Care in St. Joseph will continue to enroll patients into the Epidemiologic Investigation of Heartland Virus Disease study through the end of 2015. Providers affiliated with other health care systems can also obtain testing for both Heartland virus and Bourbon virus (see <http://www.cdc.gov/ncezid/dvbd/bourbon/index.html>) for their patients who have a clinically compatible illness. Because the laboratory tests are still experimental, the patient must be enrolled in the investigation. Inclusion criteria are:

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| 1. Age $\geq$ 12 years                      | 5. Enrolled within 4 weeks of illness onset   |
| 2. Fever ( $\geq$ 38°C or 100.4°F)          | 6. Subject does not have a non-infectious condition that could explain his/her symptoms |
| 3. Leukopenia (WBC <4,500 cells/ $\mu$ L)   |   |
| 4. Thrombocytopenia (PLT <150,000 cells/mL) |   |

A known exposure to ticks is not necessary. For more information about the investigation, including the enrollment of eligible patients, contact DHSS' Office of Veterinary Public Health (OVPH) at 573/526-4780. Have the patient's medical record available.

OVPH educational materials about tick bite prevention can be ordered at no charge by going to: <http://health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/communicable/tickscarrydisease/orderform.php>.

### Long-Term Sequelae of West Nile Virus Disease

A recent article in *The Lancet* reviewed the occurrence of long-term sequelae related to disease caused by West Nile virus (WNV). The study concluded that some patients with WNV disease, both neuroinvasive and febrile types of illness, had persistent signs/symptoms that lingered for months to years after infection. Sequelae were categorized as physical, cognitive, or functional. The most frequently cited WNV-related sequelae included muscle weakness, fatigue, and myalgia (physical); memory loss and depression (cognitive); and difficulties with daily living activities and ambulation (functional). In addition, and echoing previous findings, the authors concluded that age, underlying illness, and/or immunosuppression were linked to more severe WNV disease and death. The article (subscription required) is available at [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(15\)00134-6/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(15)00134-6/abstract).

### 2015 National Preparedness Month

September is National Preparedness Month. This year's theme is: *Don't Wait. Communicate. Make Your Emergency Plan Today*. All health care professionals, along with everyone else, are strongly encouraged to be prepared for unexpected emergencies by having a family safety plan and emergency kit. More information on National Preparedness Month is found at <http://www.ready.gov/september>.

The Ready in 3 Program's *Family Safety Guide* provides practical guidance in preparing for emergencies. It is available at <http://health.mo.gov/emergencies/readyin3/pdf/familyguideenglish.pdf>. Multiple

printed copies of this booklet (as well as other emergency preparedness resources) for patient waiting rooms can be ordered by going to <http://health.mo.gov/emergencies/readyin3/mainreadyform.php>, or by calling 573/526-9199. These materials are free, and are available in English, Spanish, Bosnian, and Braille.

#### **Recent Health Alerts, Advisories, and Updates Sent Out by DHSS**

- CDC Health Advisory: Immediate Need for Healthcare Facilities to Review Procedures for Cleaning, Disinfecting, and Sterilizing Reusable Medical Devices (September 14, 2015)
- Health Advisory: West Nile Virus Activity Widespread in Missouri (September 8, 2015)
- Health Advisory: Mumps Cases in Central Missouri (July 24, 2015)
- Health Advisory: Reporting of Heat-Related Illnesses and Deaths (July 10, 2015)

These, along with previous Health Alerts, Advisories, and Updates, can be accessed by going to <http://health.mo.gov/emergencies/ert/alertsadvisories/index.php>.