

Health

UK reports bird flu

Calif considers calling THC in pot risk to moms-to-be

LOS ANGELES, Dec 11, (AP): More than three years after California voters broadly legalized marijuana, a state panel is considering if its potent, high-inducing chemical - THC - should be declared a risk to pregnant women and require warnings.

Studies have indicated that a rising number of mothers-to-be have turned to marijuana products for relief from morning sickness and headaches, though it's effectiveness has not been backed by science.

Cannabis industry officials say too little sound research is available on THC to support such a move and warn that it could make marijuana companies a target for lawsuits with unverified claims of injuries from pot use during pregnancy.

"That seems like an open-ended checkbook. How do we defend ourselves?" said Los Angeles dispensary owner Jerred Kiloh, who heads the United Cannabis Business Association, an industry group.

Lawyers looking for a quick buck will say "give us \$10,000 or we are going to take you into a long court case," he added.

Research

The California Cannabis Industry Association echoed that fear, noting that pot's standing as an illegal drug at the federal level has choked off research by government agencies. Those studies are needed to determine if THC poses health risks for pregnant women.

"Good policy and consumer protections are based on facts and data," spokesman Josh Drayton said.

The meeting Wednesday of the obscure state Developmental and Reproductive Toxicant Identification Committee in Sacramento will focus on whether THC causes "reproductive toxicity." The panel is made up of scientists appointed by the governor.

An affirmative finding would make THC one of hundreds of chemicals judged to cause cancer or birth defects that the state requires to carry warning labels, such as arsenic and lead.

The review is being carried out under the umbrella of the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act, better known as Proposition 65. It requires warning labels for chemicals judged as dangerous and allows residents, advocacy groups and attorneys to sue on behalf of the state and collect a portion of civil penalties for failure to provide warnings.

The 1986 law has been credited with weeding out cancer-causing chemicals from products but also faulted for setting the stage for legal shakedown.

Since 2009, the state has listed marijuana smoke as being known to cause cancer, similar to tobacco smoke.

"The expansion of Proposition 65 as it relates to cannabis is premature and lacks both the facts and the data that would justify this move," Drayton said.

The US surgeon general warned in August that smoking marijuana is dangerous for pregnant women and their developing babies. Mainstream medicine advises against pot use in pregnancy because of studies suggesting it might cause premature birth, low birth weight or other

health problems, but many of those studies were in animals or had findings that were open to dispute.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse is paying for several studies on marijuana use during pregnancy.

If the California panel declares pot a risk for pregnant women, it's not clear what the immediate impact would be on the state's legal pot industry.

Presumably, packaging would need to be changed over time to carry warning labels for pregnant women. But such requirements would likely take additional steps by agencies that oversee marijuana regulation and packaging.

Even products containing CBD, a trendy ingredient extracted from marijuana or hemp, can contain trace amounts of THC.

Also:

FLORENCE, Ky: The hepatitis A outbreak in northern Kentucky has been declared over by local health officials.

No new cases have been reported in Boone, Campbell, Grant and Kenton counties in the last four months, the Northern Kentucky Health Department said Monday in a statement.

The outbreak began in August 2018 and officials documented 391 cases of the virus, including four deaths.

Hepatitis A is a contagious virus that infects the liver and can cause flu-like symptoms for several weeks.

Even though the outbreak is over, Northern Kentucky Health Department Director Lynne Saddler still urged people to get vaccinated. She said vaccinations will protect the individual and the community against future outbreaks.

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ST PAUL, Minn: Minnesotans have gotten sick from eating salad kits linked to an outbreak of E. coli, state health officials said Tuesday.

The state Department of Health says the Minnesotans became ill between Nov 8 and Nov 16. Two people were hospitalized. The ill Minnesotans ranged in age from 21 to 91. Four were from the Minneapolis-St Paul area and one from Greater Minnesota.

Officials say nine people from three states have gotten sick. The infections are linked to Fresh Express Sunflower Crisp Chopped Salad Kits. Health officials are warning consumers not to eat the salad mix, or to throw it out if they have it in their refrigerators.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued a safety alert about the salad kits.

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LONDON: Britain's government said bird flu had been confirmed at a chicken farm in eastern England on Tuesday, the first such report since June 2017.

Some 27,000 birds at the farm would be slaughtered following the discovery of the H5 strain, which the agriculture ministry described as "low pathogenic."

"The risk to public health from the virus is very low," health authorities added. "Thoroughly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat."



A photo from the event

Dasman Diabetes Institute inaugurates GeoHealth Lab

Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), founded by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, has inaugurated its GeoHealth Lab recently with the presence of Dr Qais Al Duwairi, Director-General of the Institute, Jonathan Gilbert, Ambassador of Australia to Kuwait and many distinguished guests.

During the inauguration, Dr Al Duwairi mentioned: "Dasman Diabetes Institute is proud in

driving a geohealth agenda to deal with diabetes in Kuwait and provide innovative solutions that focus on prevention and intervention".

Dasman's Geohealth Lab has built a comprehensive technical infrastructure that integrates health and administrative data with social, built and physical environmental data in support of spatial epidemiological research to understand and prevent diabetes.

This lab is the first focused Geohealth Research Hub in the region with capacity to apply spatial epidemiology and develop knowledge and understandings of the spatial drivers of diabetes in Kuwait. The lab is enabling the development of new methodologies to sustain effective public health and medical care interventions in Kuwait, which is part of our mission to serve the country and its population.

Risk higher for preemie girls

Preemies face higher risk of diabetes

NEW YORK, Dec 11, (RTRS): Babies who are born too early may be more likely to develop diabetes as children and young adults than full-term infants, a new study suggests.

In a study of children up to age 18, those born before 37 weeks' gestation were 21% more likely that those born at full term to develop type 1 diabetes, the less common form of the disease that typically appears in childhood or young adulthood. Kids born prematurely were also 26% more likely to develop type 2 diabetes in childhood.

And preemies were 24% more likely to develop type 1 diabetes and 49% more likely to develop type 2 diabetes by the time they were 43 years old.

"Preterm birth interrupts normal development of multiple organ systems, including the pancreas where insulin-producing cells are formed, which may potentially contribute to later development of diabetes," said lead study author Dr Casey Crump of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City.

Pregnancy normally lasts about 40 weeks, and babies born after 37 weeks of gestation are considered full-term. Babies born prematurely - earlier than 37 weeks - often have difficulty breathing and digesting food in the weeks after birth. Preemies can also encounter longer-term challenges such as impaired vision, hearing and cognitive skills, as well as social and behavioral problems.

Some previous research suggests that preemies have an increased risk of developing so-called insulin resistance, a failure to respond normally to the hormone insulin.

In type 1 diabetes, the pancreas can't produce insulin. In the type 2 form of the disease, which is often linked to obesity and aging, the body can't properly use or make enough insulin to convert blood sugar into energy.

For the current study, researchers examined data on almost 4.2 million babies born in Sweden from 1973 to 2014. Most were followed until they were at least 22 years old.

Overall, 0.7% of the babies in the study population went on to develop

'There is more measles circulating globally than in US'

US kids not getting measles shots before travel

NEW YORK, Dec 11, (RTRS): Even with measles outbreaks common in many parts of the world, doctors and parents are often not opting to have children vaccinated before international travel, a new study suggests.

Nearly 60% of children who could have benefited from the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccination did not get it during pre-travel doctor's appointments, researchers found.

While nearly 40% of those children did not get vaccinated because their parents or guardians declined, an equal number missed vaccinations because they weren't offered by the clinician, according to the study in JAMA Pediatrics.

"The main message is that providers should consider MMR vaccination for children traveling internationally if they are eligible for it," said the study's lead author, Dr Emily Hyle, an infectious disease physician at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

"Those traveling internationally are at a higher risk of being infected because there is more measles circulating globally than there is in the US," Hyle said. "Kids going to areas that are higher risk can easily be infected just by breathing because measles is spread through droplets in the air that last up to 2.2 hours."

The results were not what Hyle and her colleagues expected. "We were really, really surprised," she said. "We anticipated that guardians would refuse, but we didn't expect that nearly 40% of eligible kids didn't get vaccinated because the provider didn't recommend it."

To take a closer look at measles vaccinations among children who were going to be traveling internationally, Hyle and her colleagues turned to data from the Global TravEpiNet, a consortium of US travel medicine clinics supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Data for the new study came from 29 sites across the country from 2009 through 2018.

The researchers focused on 2,864 children who were deemed to be eligible for vaccination. That included children between 6 and 12 months old who had not yet been vaccinated (unless the risk of exposure is high, children aren't usually vaccinated until they are a year old) and older children who had not yet received two doses of the MMR vaccine.

Just 41.3% of eligible children received vaccinations during their visits. Among those who did not, the reason for 36.9% of kids was that it was not offered by the clinician, and for

36.4% because the guardian refused it. Another 25.7% were referred to the child's regular provider, and for 1% of cases, the vaccine was unavailable.

The most common reason clinicians didn't recommend vaccination is that they concluded, incorrectly, the child was not eligible. Guardians most commonly reported not being concerned about measles.

The US experienced more than 1,000 measles cases in the first half of 2019, the study team notes, the majority originating with travelers returning home infected. And while children represent less than 10% of international travelers from the US, they accounted for 47% of measles importations.

The study illustrates "one more missed opportunity for measles vaccination," said Dr Albert Wu, an internist and professor of health policy and management at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, Maryland. "It's surprising and disappointing that the clinicians involved failed to recommend vaccination as often as they did. Clearly there is still a need for better education and knowledge among both doctors and patients to reduce the risk of serious travel-related illnesses like this."

type 1 diabetes and just 0.1% developed type 2 diabetes, the researchers report in Diabetologia.

"Parents should know that most children who were born preterm will have good health in childhood and adulthood," Crump said by email. "However, they also have modestly increased risks of diabetes that persist into adulthood."

Overall, the risk tended to be higher for preemie girls. Boys who arrived early were about 20% more likely to develop type 1 diabetes during the study, while girls had about a 30% greater likelihood.

With type 2 diabetes, female preemies

were 60% more likely to develop this disease during childhood than full-term babies, while preemie males didn't have an increased risk. For young adults in the study, women who were preemies had a 75% increased risk of type 2 diabetes and men who were preterm had a 28% increased risk.

Many people in the study had siblings included in the analysis. Shared genetics and family circumstances appeared to explain some, but not all, of the increased risk of diabetes for preemies.

The study wasn't designed to prove whether preterm birth influences suscep-

tibility to diabetes.

Even so, the results underscore that preemies need to take steps to prevent diabetes later in life, said Ciaran Phibbs of the VA Palo Alto Health Care System and Stanford University School of Medicine in California.

"The home environment is an important factor, especially for type 2 diabetes," Phibbs, who wasn't involved in the study, said by email. This includes things like diet and exercise habits, which can impact the risk of obesity, which is higher for preemies than for full-term babies and is a risk factor for diabetes, he said.

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