

Public Health Notes

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NH DHHS Mission Statement: To join communities and families in providing opportunities for citizens to achieve health and independence.

Mosquito and Tick Season

Along with the beautiful New Hampshire weather in summer come the mosquitoes and ticks. Besides being annoying, they can also carry diseases that can be transmitted to people when the bugs bite. With mosquitoes, the greatest concerns in New Hampshire are West Nile virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and with ticks it is Lyme disease.

EEE is a rare but serious disease that carries a high mortality rate for those who contract the more severe encephalitis form. Symptoms may include high fever, severe headache, sore throat, and a stiff neck. This more serious form may also lead to seizures and coma. Symptoms usually occur 4 to 10 days after being bitten. For individuals who are bitten by a mosquito carrying WNV, the risk of contracting the infection is low,



and in the majority of cases there are no symptoms or just mild, flu-like symptoms. At times, WNV can cause meningitis and be a serious threat to seniors, young children, and those with compromised immune systems. If illness does occur, it typically happens within 3 to 14 days after a bite by an infected mosquito. There is no specific treatment for WNV or EEE.

The symptoms of Lyme disease include chills, fever, headache, fatigue, swollen glands, muscle or joint pain, and in 70-80% of people a large circular, or bullseye, rash. Symptoms usually begin within a month of exposure but can range from 3 to 32 days.

Lyme disease can be treated with antibiotics.

Residents of New Hampshire should take steps to prevent these illnesses.

To prevent Lyme disease from tick bites:

- Wear light-colored clothing to make ticks easy to see.
- Tuck pants into socks and shirts into pants.
- Consider using an insect repellent. Products containing $\geq 20\%$ DEET have been shown to be effective in repelling ticks. Clothes may be treated with Permethrin. Always follow manufacturer's instructions when applying repellents.
- Check after every two or three hours of outdoor activity for ticks on clothes and skin
- Consider using an insect repellent. Products containing $\geq 20\%$ DEET have been shown to be effective in repelling ticks. Clothes may be treated with Permethrin. Always follow manufacturer's instructions when applying repellents.
- Check after every two or three hours of outdoor

Important Dates

May is Better Hearing and Speech Month

May is Hepatitis Awareness Month

May is Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month

May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month

May is National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month

May 7-11 is Air Quality Awareness Week

May 13-19 is National Women's Health Week

May 21-27 is Recreational Water Illness and Injury Prevention Week

May 25 is Heat Safety Awareness Day

May 31 is World No Tobacco Day

June 11-17 is Men's Health Week

June 27 is National HIV Testing Day



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activity for ticks on clothing and skin.

- A thorough check of body surfaces for attached ticks should be done at the end of the day.
- Reduce the number of ticks around your home by keeping grass short, removing leaf litter, and creating a barrier of wood chips or gravel where your lawn meets the woods.
- If a tick is not attached to your skin for at least 24 hours, your chance of getting Lyme disease is extremely small. But just to be safe, monitor your health closely after a tick bite and be alert for any signs and symptoms of illness.
- A doctor may give you an antibiotic if you were bitten by a deer tick to help prevent you getting Lyme disease. Talk with your healthcare provider.

To prevent EEE and WNV from mosquito bites:

- If possible, stay inside between dusk and dark, when mosquitoes are most active.
- When outside between dusk and dark, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts.
- Use an insect repellent with DEET according to manufacturer's directions when outside
- Make sure windows have screens on them without holes.
- Eliminate standing water where mosquitoes can breed from your property, such as old tires, flower pots, and pool covers.

For more information about WNV, EEE, or Lyme disease, visit the DHHS website at www.dhhs.nh.gov or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov or call the NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 603-271-4496.

County Health Rankings

Merrimack County has the healthiest residents in New Hampshire and Coos County remains the least healthy county in the State, according to the third annual *County Health Rankings* report, recently released by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). Merrimack has replaced Rockingham County, which was ranked the healthiest in New Hampshire in 2011. According to the *Rankings*, residents of Coos County

have more than 1½ times the rate of premature deaths than residents of Merrimack County.

The *Rankings*, available at www.countyhealthrankings.org, include a snapshot of each county in New Hampshire with a color-coded map comparing each county's overall health ranking. Researchers used five measures to assess the level of overall health or "health outcomes" for New Hampshire by county: the rate of people dying before age 75, the percentage of people who report being in fair or poor health, the numbers of days people report being in poor physical and poor mental health, and the rate of low-birthweight infants.

The *Rankings* also consider factors that affect people's health within four categories: health behavior, clinical care, social and economic factors, and physical environment. Among the many health factors they look at are: rates of adult smoking, adult obesity, excessive drinking among adults, and teenage births; the number of uninsured under age 65, availability of primary care physicians, and preventable hospital stays; rates of high school graduation, adults who have attended some college, children in poverty; community safety; limited access to healthy foods; rates of physical inactivity; and air pollution levels.

The *County Health Rankings* rank the overall health of nearly every county in all 50 states, using a standard way to measure how healthy people are and how long they live. This year's *Rankings* include several new measures, such as how many fast food restaurants are in a county and the levels of physical inactivity among residents. Graphs illustrating premature death trends over 10 years are new as well.



“This is the third year that this report has been compiled and we are definitely seeing trends, though the order may change from year to year,” said New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Public Health Director Dr. José Montero. “The reports confirm what we have believed, that the health of the residents of Coos and Sullivan Counties lags behind the rest of the State.

“We believe this report is complementary to the *New Hampshire State Health Profile* the Division of Public Health Services released last year,” continued Montero. “We are also pleased to announce the release of the *2011 Snapshot of New Hampshire’s Public Health Regions, Counties, and the Cities of Manchester and Nashua*. This snapshot, a companion document to the *2011 New Hampshire State Health Profile*, is meant to assist community leaders and to identify priority health issues in their communities. We have come a long way in gathering and assessing data on public health here in the Granite State and hopefully people in the public health community statewide will use these reports to take action to improve the health of their communities.”

The *2011 Snapshot of New Hampshire’s Public Health Regions, Counties, and the Cities of Manchester and Nashua* confirms that Coos County fares significantly worse than the State in areas such as obesity, binge drinking, teen birth rates, and access to primary care providers.

Nancy Frank, Director of the North Country Health Consortium notes that work has begun in the North Country to address the data from both reports. “We are now meeting with members of our community in preparation for a day-long North Country Health Improvement Initiative Summit planned for June 14, 2012. The summit will result in action steps to make a real difference in the health of people in our county.”

The *Snapshot Report* is available online at www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/index.htm#regprof. To view the *2011 New Hampshire State Profile*, go to www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/documents/2011statehealthprofile.pdf. For more information about the Division of Public Health Services visit the DHHS website at www.dhhs.nh.gov.

New Food Inspection Database

There is a new database of food establishment inspection results in New Hampshire for use by the public. It is on the DHHS website and now enables consumers to easily view food establishment results online, rather than having to request an individual report.

Inspection results are shown using a color rating system—green, yellow, or red—that is driven by priority items being in or out of compliance. Priority item violations are the more serious violations that have been found to contribute to foodborne illness or injury. A green rating indicates that at the time of the inspection there were no priority item violations identified or that any priority item violation(s) found was immediately and permanently corrected on site at the time of the inspection. A yellow rating indicates that a priority item violation was identified and was not corrected immediately or permanently at the time of the inspection. Red indicates an imminent health hazard was identified during the inspection or the food establishment was operating without a license or the establishment had



allowed their license to expire. Examples of imminent health hazards are no water or contaminated water, being without power for a significant period of time, or having a failed septic

system.

“We are very excited to provide such a tool to the public for the first time,” said Dr. José Montero, Director of Public Health at DHHS. “Consumers want to know their food is safe. By routinely inspecting over 4,800 food establishments in the State, food inspectors are working to protect public health by preventing foodborne illness and injury.”

This report contains inspections conducted starting January 1, 2012 by the DPHS Food Protection Section under the authority of RSA 143-A. The database will be updated on a monthly basis, is organized alphabetically by town, and is searchable. This report **does not** include inspection results from:

- Self-inspecting cities and towns. For a list of self-inspecting cities and towns see: www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/fp/sanitation/documents/selfinspect.pdf.
- Temporary food service establishments and occasional food service establishments (e.g., fairs, festivals, circuses) since these are exempt from licensing under RSA 143-A
- Recreation camps licensed by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services



- Health care facilities licensed by the Department of Health and Human Services Health Facilities Administration www.dhhs.nh.gov/oos/bhfa.
- Childcare facilities licensed by the Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Licensing Unit www.dhhs.nh.gov/oos/cclu.
- Consumer complaints, construction inspections, and inspections of homestead and food processing operations do not receive a color grade and these results are not posted on the website report.

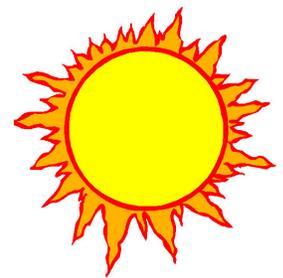
To view the database go to www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/fp/inspectionresults.htm and click on Food

Establishment Inspection Report. For questions, call the Food Protection Section of DHHS at 603-271-4589 or email them foodprotection@dhhs.state.nh.us.

Sun Safety Tips—Don't Fry Day

May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month and May 25th is Don't Fry Day, but few people know that skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States. In 2007, 58,094 people in the U.S. were diagnosed with melanomas, the most dangerous type of skin cancer, and 8,461 people died from it. With the warm weather, people will be spending more time outdoors and it is important to remember to take precautions against sunburn and overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) light.

The sun and other sources of UV light can damage anyone's skin, no matter what skin type or eye color they have. Those at greatest risk, however, are people with fair skin and red, blond, or light brown hair; people with freckles and/or those who always burn before tanning; anyone spending a great deal of time outdoors, especially between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm; and those with a family history of skin cancer. Certain prescription medications can also make people more susceptible to damage from the sun; always check with your healthcare provider.



"Melanoma is the most dangerous type of skin cancer and is also one of the most common cancers among young adults," said Dr. José Montero, Director of Public Health for the NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). "Fortunately skin cancer is also highly preventable through limiting exposure to sunlight, sunlamps, and tanning beds, all of which are sources of UV radiation."

UV rays have also been linked to eye conditions such as cataracts. If you must be in the sun, either limit sun exposure through clothing or use a sunscreen with a sun protective factor (SPF) of at least 15 that protects against both UVA and UVB rays and wear sunglasses that protect against both as well. For more information go to www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin.