



*For immediate release*

## **Public Health Touches The Lives of New Hampshire's Residents Every Day**

CONCORD, NH -- What's the first thing you think of when someone says "public health"? According to the New Hampshire Public Health Association, many residents don't realize that public health initiatives in New Hampshire help improve health, prevent disease and reduce health care costs for us all.

For instance, if this morning you ate a healthy breakfast, brushed your teeth with fluoridated water, buckled your child in to a child safety car seat, then buckled your own seatbelt, public health touched your life. That's because public health initiatives have helped educate you and your community about the importance of good nutrition, about the role fluoride plays in preventing tooth decay, and why it's important to buckle up.

Public health initiatives ensure that you...work in a safe environment...breathe clean and safe air...can have your blood pressure checked at a community health screening...dine out in a restaurant, secure in the knowledge that it's been inspected...know that your community will be prepared in case of a widespread emergency or disaster...know how to prevent infectious diseases, like the seasonal and H1N1 flus...know when and how to talk to your children about the risks of drugs and alcohol.

In light of the ongoing discussion about the cost of health care, consider these facts:

- Annual medical costs for obesity in New Hampshire are estimated at \$302 million—that's \$232 per person. Public health is helping to reduce obesity by promoting walking to school, daily physical education and worksite wellness.
- Asthma-related hospitalizations in New Hampshire cost upwards of \$4.2 million per year. Thanks to public health initiatives, including the ban on smoking in New Hampshire restaurants, tobacco use and exposure to environmental tobacco smoke is declining in the Granite State. That's especially important since exposure to environmental tobacco smoke is a leading cause of asthma in children and of asthma-related emergency room visits for children.
- A bike helmet costs \$30. In New Hampshire, hospitalization for a traumatic brain injury cost about \$700,000 per admission. By increasing awareness of the importance of bike helmets, public health is helping prevent bike-related traumatic brain injuries.
- 85% of New Hampshire's prison population have an alcohol or addiction problem. It costs \$32,750 to incarcerate one person for one year—but it costs only about \$70 per person per year to provide effective drug and alcohol prevention services in New Hampshire.

Public health—including research, preventive medicine, health education, sanitation and environmental safety—contributes to the well-being of the entire community.

For more information on public health, visit the New Hampshire Public Health Association website at [www.nhpha.org](http://www.nhpha.org).