

# 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.*

## Heat-Related Illnesses

Studies show that some people can begin to feel the adverse health effects of heat when the temperature is as low as 75°F. The body normally cools itself by sweating, but under some conditions sweating just isn't enough, and the person's temperature can rise quickly. When this happens a high body temperature may damage the brain or other organs.

Several factors can affect someone's ability to cool themselves during extremely hot weather, including: high humidity, age (young or old), obesity, fever, dehydration, heart disease, poor circulation, sunburn, and the use of certain prescription drugs.

There are actually several illnesses caused by excessive heat. **Heat rash** is a skin irritation caused by excessive sweating. It may occur at any age but is most common in young children. Heat rash is not usually dangerous, just uncomfortable. Heat rash may look like a cluster of pimples, a red area of skin, or small blisters. The best treatment for heat rash is to get to a cooler, less humid environment. Keeping the affected area dry and using body powder may help to increase comfort.

**Heat cramps** are muscular pains and spasms due to exertion. Although heat cramps are not usually a problem in themselves, they are an early signal that the body is having trouble coping with the heat. If you have heart problems or are on a low-sodium diet, get medical attention. Otherwise stop all



## Important Dates

*July is UV Safety Month*

American Academy of Ophthalmology

[www.ao.org](http://www.ao.org)

*August is National Breastfeeding Month*

United States Breastfeeding Committee

[www.usbreastfeeding.org](http://www.usbreastfeeding.org)

*August is National Immunization Awareness Month*

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines)

*August 1-7 is World Breastfeeding Week*

La Leche League International

[www.llli.org](http://www.llli.org)

*August 7–13 is National Health Center Week*

National Association of Community Health Centers, Inc.

[www.healthcenterweek.com](http://www.healthcenterweek.com)

activity and sit in a cool place, drink clear juice or a sports drink, and seek medical attention if heat cramps do not subside within an hour.

**Heat exhaustion** typically occurs when people exercise heavily or work in a hot, humid place where body fluids are lost through heavy sweating. Blood flow to the skin increases, causing blood flow to decrease

to the vital organs. This results in a form of mild shock. Signs to look for include cool, moist, pale or flushed



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skin; heavy sweating; headache; nausea or vomiting; dizziness; and/or fatigue. If not treated, the patient may suffer heat stroke. Body temperature will be near normal. Cooling measures that may be effective for a victim of heat exhaustion include cool beverages as recommended by a doctor, rest, a cool shower or bath, air conditioning, and lightweight clothing. Seek medical help if the person vomits, has a change of mental status, chest pain, or difficulty breathing.

**Heat stroke** is a life-threatening condition. The patient's temperature control system, which produces sweating to cool the body, stops working. The body temperature can rise so high that brain damage and even death may result if the body is not cooled quickly. Symptoms of heat stroke include hot, red skin; changes in consciousness; rapid, weak pulse; and rapid, shallow breathing. If the patient was sweating from heavy work or exercise, skin may be wet, otherwise it will feel dry. Get the victim to a shady area. Call for emergency medical help immediately. Cool the victim rapidly using whatever methods you can, such as cool water, a cool shower, or wrap the victim in a cool, wet sheet and fan them vigorously. Do not give the victim fluids to drink. **Sunstroke** is another name for heat stroke.

During hot weather, there are steps people can take to prevent heat-related illness. **Air conditioning** is the number one protective factor against heat-related illness and death. If a home is not air conditioned, people can reduce their risk of heat-related illness by spending time in public facilities that are air conditioned. During hot weather it is important to increase the amount of **fluids** you drink, water being the best. If you are on water pills or limited in the amount you should drink, speak with your doctor. Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and large amounts of sugar because these can actually make the body lose fluid. Wear loose, lightweight **clothing**. Limit outdoor activity, but if you must be outdoors, try to limit your activity to morning and evening hours. Watch **what you eat**, sticking to small meals more frequently, and avoid high-protein meals. During extreme heat, check on friends and neighbors, especially those at increased risk of a heat-related illness.

To learn more about hot weather safety visit <https://www.cdc.gov/extremeheat/>.

**CLIMATE CHANGE & EXTREME HEAT**

Extreme heat events, or heat waves, are a leading cause of **EXTREME WEATHER-RELATED DEATHS** in the United States and the number of heat-related deaths is rising!

**WHO'S AT RISK?**

Adults over 65, children under 4, people with existing medical problems such as heart disease, and people without access to air conditioning

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

**STAY COOL**

- Find an air-conditioned shelter
- Avoid direct sunlight
- Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing
- Take cool showers or baths
- Do not rely on a fan as your primary cooling device

**STAY HYDRATED**

- Drink more water than usual
- Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink more fluids
- Avoid alcohol or liquids containing high amounts of sugar
- Remind others to drink enough water

**STAY INFORMED**

- Check local news for extreme heat alerts and safety tips
- Learn the symptoms of heat illness

**LEARN MORE!**

Visit CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking Network to learn more about climate change and extreme heat at [www.cdc.gov/ephracking](http://www.cdc.gov/ephracking)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES  
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

CDC  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR ZOOLOGICAL ZOOLOGICAL LABORATORIES

## Rabies

They may be cute and cuddly, but wild animals pose some serious health risks to people, especially when it comes to rabies. Rabies is an acute viral illness that attacks the nervous system. It is a disease passed from animal to animal through contact with infected saliva or other infectious material (such as brain tissue). Most commonly, this occurs as a result of a bite from an infected animal. People can get rabies through bites or scratches and sometimes through bodily fluids, such as saliva or brain tissue, being introduced into the eyes, nose, mouth, or open wounds. If not treated before symptoms appear, rabies is almost always fatal.

In New Hampshire, rabies is most often found in skunks, foxes, raccoons, and other meat-eating animals, as well as bats. It is important to remember that any mammal can be infected with and transmit rabies, including domestic animals such as dogs and cats. It is not always easy to tell if an animal is rabid. Contrary to what is commonly believed, not all rabid animals walk

funny, foam at the mouth, or drool. Animals may stagger, appear restless, be aggressive, appear very friendly, seem to be choking, or they may show no symptoms at all.

The symptoms of rabies in people progress rapidly, usually in a few days, and include anxiety, confusion, hallucinations, and the inability to swallow. There is a treatment for people exposed to rabies, but it must be started before symptoms develop. If you come into contact with an animal—such as being bitten or

scratched—wash any wounds with soap and water and seek medical attention.

There are precautions people should take to reduce their risk of exposure to rabies:

- Vaccinate your pets. A vaccine is available for dogs, cats, ferrets, cattle, horses, and sheep.
- Don't touch stray animals. Even if they are injured, it is better to call your local animal control officer or the local police.
- Avoid contact with all wildlife. Even innocent-appearing young animals can be positive for



rabies.

- Discourage wild animals from dining near your home. Do not leave pet food outdoors and secure garbage can lids. Do not feed wild animals, such as raccoons, foxes, and skunks.
- Teach children to stay away from all wild animals

and pets other than their own.

- Don't touch dead animals. If it is absolutely necessary, wear rubber or latex gloves.
- If you are exposed to rabies or think there is a chance you might have been, seek medical

advice immediately! Don't wait for symptoms to develop or it may be too late for treatment.

For more information, visit NH Fish & Game at [www.wildlife.state.nh.us](http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us), the CDC at [www.cdc.gov/rabies](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies), or call the NH DHHS, Division of Public Health Services, Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 603-271-4496.

## Mosquito-Borne Diseases

West Nile Virus (WNV), along with Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), are mosquito-borne disease that are transmitted to people through the bite of an infected mosquito.

Symptoms of WNV usually appear within a week after someone is bitten by an infected mosquito, although many people can be infected and not develop any symptoms, or only develop very mild symptoms. Symptoms can include flu-like illness including fever, muscle aches, headaches, and fatigue. A very small percentage of individuals infected with WNV can go on to develop more serious central nervous system disease, including meningitis or encephalitis. If you or someone you know is experiencing flu-like symptoms, including fever and headache, contact your healthcare provider.

Residents and visitors to New Hampshire should protect themselves and their family members by using an effective mosquito repellent that contains 30% DEET, wearing long sleeves and pants when mosquitoes are active, and removing standing water from around your home so mosquitoes do not have a place to breed. Repellents with picaridin, IR3535, and some oil of lemon eucalyptus and para-menthane-diol products also provide protection against mosquito bites.

More information about EEE and West Nile virus

is available on the DHHS website at [www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov) and on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). Also read the March-April 2016 *Public Health Notes* article about Zika virus.

## National Youth Risk Behavior Survey

In the United States, schools play a critical role in promoting the health and safety of young people and helping them establish life-long healthy behaviors. Each school day, the nation's schools provide an opportunity for 50 million students to learn about the dangers of unhealthy behaviors and practice skills that promote a healthy lifestyle. Unhealthy behaviors, or risk behaviors, are often established during childhood and persist into adulthood. However, they are largely preventable.

New results from the 2015 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) show that while the prevalence of cigarette smoking among high school students dropped to the lowest levels since the survey began in 1991, the use of e-cigarettes among students is posing new challenges.

Although the prevalence of current cigarette use decreased from 28% in 1991 to 11% in 2015, new data from the 2015 survey found that 24% of high school students reported using e-cigarettes in the previous 30 days.

On the plus side, significant progress has been made in reducing physical fighting among adolescents. Since 1991, the percentage of high school students who had been in a physical fight at least once during the past 12 months decreased from 42% to 23%. However, nationwide, the percentage of students who had not gone to school because of safety

concerns is still too high, with 6% of students missing at least 1 day of school during the past month because they felt they would be unsafe.

To read more about the report visit the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/features/yrbs/index.html>.



## HIV Testing Day

Some people think HIV and AIDS are diseases of the past or nothing to worry about anymore, but the truth is an estimated 1.2 million people in the United States are living with HIV, and that number grows by almost 50,000 every year. One in eight people who have HIV don't know it. That means they aren't getting the medical care they need to stay healthy and avoid passing HIV to others.

HIV is the virus that causes the disease AIDS. National HIV Testing Day is a reminder to get the facts, get tested, and get involved to take care of yourself and your partners. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has found that more than 90% of new HIV infections in the U.S. could be prevented by testing and diagnosing people who have HIV and ensuring that they receive prompt, ongoing care and treatment. Early linkage to and retention in HIV care is central to managing HIV and promoting health among all people living with HIV. HIV medicines can keep people with HIV healthy for many years and greatly reduce the chance of transmitting HIV to their sex partners. The only way to know for sure if you are infected is to get tested.

HIV is a virus that attacks the body's immune system, specifically the CD4 cells, often called T cells. People become infected only by coming into contact with certain body fluids—blood, semen, pre-seminal fluid, rectal fluids, vaginal fluids, and breast milk—from a person who has HIV. Most cases of HIV are spread through sexual contact or by the sharing of dirty syringes, needles, or equipment.

CDC recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 get tested for HIV at least once as part of routine health care and that people with certain risk factors get tested more often. People with more than one sex partner, people with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and people who inject drugs are likely to be at high risk and should get tested at least once a year. Sexually active gay and bisexual men may

benefit from even more frequent testing, depending on their risk. To protect your own health, you should also get tested if you have been sexually assaulted. If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant, CDC also recommends HIV testing with each pregnancy, both for your own benefit and to reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to your baby.

Thanks to better treatments, people with HIV are now living longer—and with a better quality of life—



than ever before. If you are living with HIV, it's important to make choices that keep you healthy and protect others. You should start medical care and begin HIV treatment as soon as you are diagnosed with HIV. Taking medicine to treat HIV, called antiretroviral therapy or ART, is recommended for all people with HIV, to slow the progression of HIV and help protect your immune system. The medicine can keep you healthy for many years and greatly reduces your chance of transmitting HIV to sex partners if taken the right way, every day. If you're taking medicine to treat HIV, visit your healthcare provider regularly and always take your medicine as directed to keep your viral load as low as possible.

Learn more at <https://www.aids.gov/news-and-events/awareness-days/hiv-testing-day/> or visit <http://www.cdc.gov/features/hivtesting/>.