

Public Health Notes

Volume 11 Issue 2

March-April 2016

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

It's Time to Test Your Well Water

Groundwater Awareness Week is March 6–12. If you have a private well supplying water to your home, testing is up to you, but it is a good idea for your health and safety. Approximately 60% of New Hampshire residents are supplied by community water systems at home. Those customers can check the annual [Consumer Confidence Report](#) provided by their water supplier to find out what's in the water they drink. But for the 40% of New Hampshire residents who rely on private wells, there are no statewide testing requirements. Only a few towns require private well testing, and that is typically only in conjunction with obtaining a certificate of occupancy for a new home.

Because of our geology and sometimes due to past releases of contaminants, it's very common to have unhealthy levels of contaminants in water from private wells. The NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) recommends that private well users have their water tested every few years at an accredited private lab or at the State lab.

For more information on NHDES's testing recommendations and a list of accredited labs, visit www.des.nh.gov and select private well testing from the A to Z list or call the NH DES Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau at (603) 271-2513.



Important Dates

March is Brain Injury Awareness Month

Brain Injury Association of America

www.biausa.org

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation

www.preventcancer.org/colorectal

March is National Nutrition Month

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

www.eatright.org

March 6–12 is National Sleep Awareness Week

National Sleep Foundation

www.sleepfoundation.org

March 19 is Kick Butts Day

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

www.kickbuttsday.org

March 20–26 is National Poison Prevention Week

Poison Prevention Council

www.poisonprevention.org

March 22 is World Water Day

UN Water

www.unwater.org

March 22 is American Diabetes Alert Day

American Diabetes Association

www.diabetes.org

April is National Cancer Control Month

American Cancer Society

www.cancer.org

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Prevent Child Abuse America

www.preventchildabuse.org

Child Welfare Information Gateway

www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth



New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services

Division of Public Health Services

29 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03301

www.dhhs.nh.gov



April is National Donate Life Month

HRSA Information Center

www.organdonor.gov

April is National Minority Health & Health Disparities Month

Office of Minority Health Resource Center

www.minorityhealth.hhs.gov

April 4–10 is National Public Health Week

American Public Health Association

www.nphw.org

April 7 is World Health Day

World Health Organization

www.who.org or www.paho.org

April 16–23 is National Infant Immunization Week

CDC, National Immunization Program

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/events/niiw/index.html

April 22 is Earth Day

Earth Day Network

www.earthday.net

scientists started to be concerned that the virus might cause more than just mild symptoms. An alarming number of babies were being born with a condition called microcephaly, a congenital condition associated with a smaller than normal head and incomplete brain development.

There is still a great deal scientists do not know about this virus, but more is being discovered every day. What they do know is that the virus is transmitted (passed to people) by the bite of an infected female *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. *Aedes albopictus* can also transmit the virus, but not as efficiently. Neither of these mosquitoes is found in New Hampshire. The virus spreads because a mosquito gives it to someone and then another mosquito bites the infected person, becoming infected itself, and then bites another person infecting them, and so on. There have been 193 travel-associated cases of Zika identified in the United States, but so far no transmission of the virus by mosquitoes has occurred in the 50 states, though this is expected to change with the coming warmer months because these mosquitoes are found in several states in the southeastern U.S.

Most people infected do not develop symptoms and usually don't know they've been exposed. About 1 in 5 people, however, do develop a rash, fever, joint pain, and conjunctivitis. It generally takes 2 to 7 days for symptoms to develop once someone has been infected. The virus is also believed to be linked to a rare neurological condition called Guillain-Barré Syndrome. The link to birth defects, including microcephaly, seems to be solid, however. Recently studies have shown that the virus can affect the brains and other organs of unborn babies throughout a pregnancy, so it is not just during the first trimester that people need to be concerned.

There is no evidence that the virus is passed between people by casual contact, such as sneezing, hugging, kissing, or sharing utensils. There have been cases of sexual transmission, however, of the virus from symptomatic males who traveled to or lived in a region with ongoing Zika transmission to their

Zika Virus



An Aedes aegypti mosquito.

There has been much in the news recently about the Zika virus and its link to birth defects, but the Zika virus was first discovered in 1947 and the first human case was identified in 1952. It wasn't until the outbreak in Brazil, which was identified in May 2015, that

female partner. This is how the first case occurred in New Hampshire. It is not known how common this is, if a man can only transmit Zika to a woman while he has symptoms, or for how long the virus remains in semen. People with Zika also have the virus in their blood for a short period of time, so blood donors are being carefully screened as well to prevent the virus from getting into the blood supply.

“For the majority of people in New Hampshire Zika virus is not an issue,” said Dr. Benjamin Chan, State Epidemiologist at DHHS. “Where people should be concerned is if they are traveling to a Zika-affected area or they are the partner of a male who has traveled to one of these areas. In New Hampshire, we are closely monitoring what is happening around the world and in the U.S., are working with physicians in the State to help identify travelers who may have been exposed to Zika, and working to get people with symptoms tested to see if they have the virus. There is much more that needs to be learned about this virus and this ever-changing situation.”

There is no specific treatment for Zika virus, but most people recover without long-term effects. There is not yet a vaccine against the Zika virus, but the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is working quickly on one that they hope to start testing in people by the end of 2016.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has advised that pregnant women should postpone travel to Zika-affected areas (visit wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information for a complete list) until they are no longer pregnant. Other travelers should take precautions to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes if they are going to a Zika-affected area. These steps include: wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants, staying in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside, sleeping under a mosquito bed net if you are overseas or outside and are not able to protect yourself from mosquito bites, using an EPA-registered insect repellent according to manufacturer’s directions, and treating clothing and gear with permethrin or purchasing permethrin-treated items. For more on precautions, visit www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/index.html.

Men who have lived in or traveled to an area with Zika and have a pregnant partner should use condoms the right way, every time or abstain from sex during pregnancy. Individuals who are concerned about contracting Zika from a male sex partner can use condoms the right way, every time, which can also prevent other sexually transmitted infections. Though not having sex is the best way to prevent pregnancy and all sexually transmitted diseases.

For more information about the Zika virus, visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov and the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services website at www.dhhs.nh.gov.



Sleep Safety

The American Society for Investigative Pathology (ASIP) has conducted research on the impact to breastfeeding of different sleeping arrangements for infants. Following advice to sleep in the same room with their infants—but not in the same bed—does not appear to discourage new mothers from breastfeeding, as some experts had feared, according to a new study funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The study was published online in *Academic Pediatrics* and conducted by researchers at Boston University, the University of Virginia and Yale University.

Infants who sleep in a bed with their mother or another individual are at higher risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other kinds of sleep-related infant death. The NIH’s Safe to Sleep campaign advises that babies sleep near, but separately from, parents or caregivers—in the same room, but in their own safety-approved crib, bassinet, or play yard.

However, many infant care and public health experts feared that avoiding bed sharing might interfere with breastfeeding, recommended because it also protects against SIDS and provides other health benefits.

The researchers conducted a nationally representative survey of more than 3,000 mothers and found that the majority (65.5 percent) reported room sharing without bed sharing, while 20.7 percent reported bed sharing. Thirty percent of women reported exclusively breastfeeding. Among these women, 58.2 percent room-shared and did not bed-share.

The authors also found that mothers were more likely to follow the recommendations for room sharing and exclusive breastfeeding if they had received advice to do so. The women were asked if they received advice from any of these sources: family, baby’s doctors, nurses at the hospital where the baby was born, and the media.

The greater the number of sources a mother had heard from, the more likely she was to follow the recommendations. For more information about the national Safe to Sleep campaign, visit the National Institute’s of Health website at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/>.

Anyone. Anytime.

In response to the opioid crisis in New Hampshire, a partnership including the Department of Health and Human Services has created the campaign “Anyone. Anytime.” to educate the public and professionals about addiction, emergency overdose medications, and support services for anyone experiencing opioid addiction. This campaign is designed to help anyone affected by this crisis, including: people experiencing addiction, parents, family and friends of those experiencing

addiction and health care, safety, and other system staff working with people who may be experiencing addiction.

The title refers to the knowledge that anyone can experience addiction and anyone can recover. Though many drugs are addictive and opioids (prescription pain killers) are of great concern, the most recent explosive rise in heroin use in New Hampshire and the country is of greatest concern. Heroin is one of the most dangerous and addictive drugs on the illicit drug market. Because heroin is illegal, unlike the prescription pain medications many heroin users become addicted to first, it is not regulated, so people who use it cannot be certain of the quality, dosage, or added harmful ingredients, leading to an increased risk of overdose and death.

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, the rate of New Hampshire residents who report having used heroin at least once in their lifetime has increased since 2005–2005 from 1.2% to 3.3% in 2010–2011. The average age of first use of heroin nationally is 23.

In addition to crime and safety concerns, heroin’s greatest toll is the number of deaths attributable to it. According to the New Hampshire Medical Examiner’s Office, the number of heroin-related deaths rose substantially between 2010 and 2013, from 13 to 70. New Hampshire hospitals are also reporting a significant increase in the number of babies being born with symptoms of opiate withdrawal related to maternal drug use.

For more information about the campaign, visit <http://drugfreenh.org/anyoneanytime> or www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcbcs/bdas/documents/issue-brief-heroin.pdf. For heroin facts go to www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/documents/heroin.pdf.

