

Public Health Notes

Volume 10 Issue 5

September-October 2015

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

National Preparedness Month: *Don't Wait. Communicate. Make Your Emergency Plan Today.*

September is National Preparedness Month, which was implemented to raise awareness about preparing for a disaster. You never know when a flood, a disease outbreak, or even a tornado will happen, so it is important that everyone prepare themselves and their families as much as possible in advance.

According to the 2013 New Hampshire Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), 32.2% of households surveyed consider themselves well prepared for a large-scale disaster, and 53.6% feel they are somewhat prepared. "We are pleased with these numbers," said DHHS Emergency Services Unit Director Rick Cricenti, "as they indicate that people are taking the possibility of a large or long-term disaster seriously. There is always room for improvement though and we would like to see those numbers improve. There are some simple, common sense steps we can all take to be better prepared and the first step is to talk it over with your family."

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Important Dates

September is Baby Safety Awareness Month

Juvenile Product Manufacturers Association

www.jpma.org

September is Fruit & Veggies More Matters Month

Fruits & Veggies More Matters

www.fruitsandveggiesmorematter.gov

September is Healthy Aging Month

Healthy Aging Campaign

Educational Television Network, Inc.

www.healthyaging.net

September is National Recovery Month

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

www.recoverymonth.gov

September is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition

www.fitness.gov

September is National Cholesterol Education Awareness Month

National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute

www.cdc.gov/features/cholesterolawareness/

September is National Food Safety Education Month

National Restaurant Association Education Foundation

www.foodsafetymonth.com

September is National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month

National Ovarian Cancer Coalition, Inc.



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www.ovariancancerawareness.org

September is National Preparedness Month

American Red Cross

www.redcross.org

September is Newborn Screening Awareness Month

Save Babies Through Screening Foundation

www.savebabies.org

September 1-7 is National Childhood Injury Prevention Week

The American Academy of Pediatrics

www.healthychildren.org

Safe Kids Worldwide

www.safekids.org

September 7-13 is Suicide Prevention Week

American Association of Suicidology

www.suicidology.org

September 27-October 3 is Active Aging Week

International Council on Active Aging

www.icaa.cc

October is Children's Health Month

Office of Children's Health Protection

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

www2.epa.gov/children/childrens-health-month

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month
National Resource Center for Domestic Violence

www.nrcdv.org

October is Health Literacy Month

Health Literacy Council

www.healthliteracymonth.org

October is Healthy Babies Month

March of Dimes/Birth Defects Foundation

www.marchofdimes.com

October is Healthy Lung Month

American Lung Association

www.lungusa.org

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

National Breast Cancer Foundation

www.nationalbreastcancer.org

October is National Dental Hygiene Month

American Dental Hygienists Association

www.adha.org/ndhm

October is National Depression and Mental Health Screening Month

Screening for Mental Health, Inc.

www.mentalhealthscreening.org

October is National Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) Awareness Month

SIDS Alliance

www.sidsalliance.org

October is 4-10 is National Mental Illness Awareness Week

American Psychiatric Association

www.healthyminds.org

NAMI - National Alliance on Mental Illness

www.nami.org/miaw

October 17 is International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

United Nations

www.un.org/en/events/povertyday

October 18-24 is International Infection Prevention Week

Association of Professionals in Infection

Control and Epidemiology, Inc.

www.apic.org

October 18-24 is National Health Education Week

Society for Public Health Education

www.sophe.org/NHEW.cfm

The 2013 BRFSS also showed that 63.2% of New Hampshire residents have a three-day supply of water on hand, compared with only 54% in 2007. Also 80.6% of people in the Granite State would rely on a cell phone to communicate with family and friends (which frequently fail immediately after a disaster), compared with 75.8% of respondents in 2007. Unfortunately only 16.8% of households have a written disaster evacuation plan, which is down from the 2007 BRFSS which showed a rate of 20.7%. Additionally, 10.8% of people said they have difficulty walking or climbing stairs, which may make it hard for them to evacuate in an emergency.



Preparing an Emergency Kit

Though each household's kit will look somewhat different, your emergency supplies should include:

- At least a three-day supply of drinkable water (one gallon per person per day and don't forget pets)
- Battery- or crank-powered radio
- Flashlights
- Batteries
- First aid kit/basic medications (pain killers, prescriptions, cough medicine)
- Food with a long shelf life (and keep it rotating so it doesn't expire)
- Baby food, formula, and diapers if you have a young child
- Pet food and medications if you have pets
- Cell phone with a car charger
- Alternate heating source or a plan of where to go if the power is out for an extended time
- Cash

“By nature people are reactive instead of proactive and no one wants to think about a possible disaster happening to them,” said Cricenti, “but the reality is that emergencies happen all the time and it is in our own best interest to be prepared.”

All residents of New Hampshire are encouraged to make emergency preparations for themselves and their families, including having an evacuation plan, a plan for communicating with each other if you are separated when an event occurs, and at least a three-day supply of food and water on hand for everyone in the household in case you can't leave home, including baby and pet

supplies, prescriptions, and basic medications. Some good resources exist at www.ready.gov and at www.nh.gov/readynh. For a brochure on what to do to get ready entitled “Preparing for an Emergency: The Smart Thing to Do,” go to www.nh.gov/readynh/documents/emergency_planning_brochure.pdf.

Vaccines for Back to School

The new school year is starting! That means new clothes, new school supplies, and new shoes. There is one more thing kids should get as they head back to school: their vaccines. There is no better way to protect your children from potentially deadly contagious diseases than immunization.

Preventable illnesses such as whooping cough are on the rise throughout the country. New Hampshire law requires that elementary school children be vaccinated against nine communicable diseases including: diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, and chickenpox. You can take these important steps to make sure your child is protected:

- Call your child's medical provider
- Ensure your child's vaccinations are up-to-date
- Schedule an appointment for needed vaccinations
- Get two copies of your child's immunization records (one for you and one for the school nurse or other school officials).

All vaccines in New Hampshire for children under age 19 are free. Make sure your child has a productive and safe school year. For more information, visit the DHHS Immunization Program at www.dhhs.nh.gov or call them at 603-271-4482.



Blood Cholesterol Awareness

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance inside the body used to make certain hormones and to help the liver create bile, which plays a role in the digestion of food that we eat. Cholesterol is also a structural component of every cell in our body. The body, especially the liver, makes the cholesterol it needs. The cholesterol in the body and the type found in food are different. But the body creates more cholesterol when we eat a diet high in saturated and trans fats.

Two types of cholesterol are usually reported in routine cholesterol screening: high density lipoprotein (HDL) also called “good cholesterol” and low density lipoprotein (LDL) also called “bad cholesterol.” Cholesterol, especially LDL, can build up inside the wall of someone’s blood vessels called arteries and thus increase the risk of developing heart disease. When the level of cholesterol in the blood is too high, the condition is called “high blood cholesterol.”

High blood cholesterol is often due to an excessive consumption of foods that are rich in saturated fats and trans fats, or triglycerides. However, in a few cases, it can be due to excess internal production, independent of food consumption. According to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), in 2013, 92% of New Hampshire residents age 40 or older reported having been screened for blood cholesterol levels over the past five years. Also, in 2013, 44% of New Hampshire residents age 40 or older reported having been told by a healthcare provider that they had high cholesterol.

But there are things we can all do to help control and prevent high blood cholesterol:

- Talk to your healthcare provider about when and if you should get tested to determine your cholesterol level. If it is high, your provider can help you determine a plan for healthy eating that may include medication and lifestyle changes to help control it.
- Lifestyle changes include: eating a healthy diet that includes whole grains, lots of fruits and vegetables, and lean meat; staying away from foods that are high in trans and saturated fats; getting regular exercise—even modest amounts can help control weight, reduce heart disease and diabetes risk, and

help lower your triglyceride levels and raise your “good” cholesterol level; maintaining a healthy weight; and avoiding or quitting tobacco use. Call the NH Tobacco Helpline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).

To learn more, visit the DHHS website at www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdpc/hdsp/cholesterol.htm or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at www.cdc.gov/cholesterol/.

Fatty meat, fried foods, and whole-fat dairy products have been linked to high blood cholesterol.



October is SIDS Awareness Month

Each year in the United States there are up to 3,500 sudden, unexpected infant deaths (SUIDs) caused by accidental suffocation or accidents during sleep. SIDS, or sudden infant death syndrome, is the leading cause of death for infants one month to one year of age, claiming the lives of nearly 1,500 babies each year.

Healthcare providers and researchers don’t know the exact causes of SIDS, but they do know methods to help reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related SUIDs that include the following:

- Always place babies on their backs to sleep for every sleep.
- Use a firm sleep surface, such as a mattress in a safety-approved crib, covered by a fitted sheet.
- Have the baby share your room, not your bed. Your baby should not sleep in an adult bed, on a couch, or on a chair alone, with you, or with anyone else.
- Keep soft objects such as pillows and loose bedding out of your baby’s sleep area.
- Prevent exposure to smoking during pregnancy and after birth because these are important risk factors for SIDS. The risk of SIDS is even stronger when a baby shares a bed with a smoker. To reduce risk, do not smoke during pregnancy, and do not smoke or allow smoking around your baby. For help



in quitting, call the NH Tobacco Helpline at 1-800-Q U I T - N O W (800-784-8669). To reduce risk, breastfeed baby then put baby to

sleep in a close but separate safety-approved crib.

New Hampshire is holding a Safe Sleep conference on Monday, September 21 this year at Wentworth-Douglass Hospital for anyone interested. To register go to www.nhahonn.com.

Halloween Safety

Halloween and trick-or-treating can be great fun for children and families and wonderful times to make memories. Unfortunately, they can also be dangerous if parents and guardians don't take proper precautions. Fatality records from across the country show that for the past 20+ years, Halloween is the deadliest day of the year for child pedestrian accidents.

In order to protect children's health, DHHS offers the following health tips to parents regarding treats:

- Children shouldn't snack while they're out trick-or-treating. They should wait until they get home and parents have had a chance to inspect the goodies. Give children a snack or light meal before they go—don't send them out on an empty stomach.
- Tell children not to accept, and especially not to eat, anything that isn't commercially wrapped.
- When children bring their treats home, discard any home-made candy or baked goods. Parents of young children should also remove any choking hazards such as gum, peanuts, hard candies, coins, or small toys.
- Inspect commercially wrapped treats for signs of tampering, such as an unusual appearance or discoloration, tiny pinholes, or tears in wrappers. Throw away anything that looks suspicious.
- If juice or cider is served to children at Halloween parties, make sure it is pasteurized or otherwise treated to destroy harmful bacteria. Juice or cider that has not been treated or pasteurized will say so on the label.

Additionally, DHHS offers the following safety tips for Halloween:

- For greater visibility, decorate or trim costumes with reflective tape that will glow in the beam of a car's headlights.
- To easily see and be seen, parents and children should also carry flashlights.
- Costumes should be short enough to prevent children from tripping and falling.
- Children should wear well-fitting, sturdy shoes; high heels are not good for safe walking.
- When purchasing a costume and accessories look for the words "flame resistant" on the label. This means though they will still catch fire, they will resist burning and should be extinguished quickly.



- Swords, knives, and similar costume accessories should be made of soft and flexible material.
- When using make up follow all directions carefully. Try a little dab on your arm a few days before to make sure you are not allergic to it before applying to your face.
- Do not decorate the face with things that aren't meant for use on skin.
- Be careful to avoid getting make up in the eyes as some of it can cause harm, especially if it says not for use near the eyes.
- Do not use decorative contact lenses without an eye exam and a prescription from an eye care professional. Non-prescription decorative contact lenses are both dangerous and illegal.
- Teach children how to call 9-1-1 if they have an emergency or get lost.

For more information, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/family/halloween.