

# Public Health Notes

Volume 11 Issue 5

September–October 2016

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

## Zika Virus Update

The Zika virus is spread by species of mosquitoes called *Aedes aegypti* and less efficiently by *Aedes albopictus*, neither of which have been found in New Hampshire. The virus has been linked to severe birth defects in babies born to mothers who become infected while pregnant. The virus was first identified in 1947 but the current outbreak began in Brazil in May 2015.

There have been almost 3,000 travel-associated and 43 locally acquired cases identified in the United States and the District of Columbia. Transmission of the virus by mosquitoes has now been identified in the U.S. There have been 8 travel-associated cases in New Hampshire to date. Scientists continue to make important discoveries and much more is being learned about the virus. Research also continues on a vaccine.

It is now known that the virus can also be transmitted sexually by all types of sex (vaginal, anal, oral) and between any two people if one of them is infected. Therefore, if a woman is pregnant and her partner has traveled recently to an area with active Zika transmission it is important that they use a condom during sex correctly every time for the duration of the pregnancy, or another barrier method,



## Important Dates

*September is Baby Safety Awareness Month*

Juvenile Product Manufacturers Association

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

*September is Fruit & Veggies More Matters Month*

Fruit & Veggies More Matters

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

*September is National Recovery Month*

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

[www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov)

*September is National Cholesterol Education Awareness Month*

National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute

[www.cdc.gov/features/cholesterolawareness/](http://www.cdc.gov/features/cholesterolawareness/)

*September is National Food Safety Education Month*

National Restaurant Association Education Foundation

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

*September is National Preparedness Month*

Cosponsored by American Red Cross

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

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

*September 1–7 is National Childhood Injury Prevention Week*

The American Academy of Pediatrics

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

Safe Kids Worldwide

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

*September 5–11 is Suicide Prevention Week*

American Association of Suicidology

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



New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services

Division of Public Health Services

29 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03301

[www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov)



# Public Health Notes

Volume 11 Issue 5

September–October 2016

## *October is Children's Health Month*

Office of Children's Health Protection  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
[www2.epa.gov/children/childrens-health-month](http://www2.epa.gov/children/childrens-health-month)

## *October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month*

National Resource Center for Domestic Violence  
[www.nrcdv.org](http://www.nrcdv.org)

## *October is Health Literacy Month*

Health Literacy Consulting  
[www.healthliteracymonth.org](http://www.healthliteracymonth.org)

## *October is Healthy Babies Month*

March of Dimes/Birth Defects Foundation  
[www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com)

## *October is Healthy Lung Month*

American Lung Association  
[www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org)

## *October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month*

National Breast Cancer Foundation  
[www.nationalbreastcancer.org](http://www.nationalbreastcancer.org)

## *October is National Depression and Mental Health Screening Month*

Screening for Mental Health, Inc.  
[www.mentalhealthscreening.org](http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org)

## *October 2–8 is National Mental Illness Awareness Week*

American Psychiatric Association  
[www.psychiatric.org](http://www.psychiatric.org)  
NAMI – National Alliance on Mental Illness  
[www.nami.org/miaw](http://www.nami.org/miaw)

## *October 16–22 is International Infection Prevention Week*

Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology, Inc.  
[www.apic.org](http://www.apic.org)

## *October 1 is International Day of Older Persons*

United Nations  
[www.un.org/en/events/olderpersonsday](http://www.un.org/en/events/olderpersonsday)

## *October 17 is International Day for the Eradication of Poverty*

United Nations  
[www.un.org/en/events/povertyday](http://www.un.org/en/events/povertyday)

or abstain. Scientists do not yet know how long the virus is transmissible from someone to their partner, so if a couple is trying to get pregnant and one of them has traveled, it is important that they take precautions to



prevent mosquito bites and against transmission of the virus. CDC recommends asymptomatic men and women wait 8 weeks and 6 months for symptomatic men before having unprotected sex. A new recommendation by the CDC is that all pregnant women in the U.S. be assessed for possible Zika virus exposure during each prenatal care visit.

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. Recent studies have shown that the virus can affect not just the brains but other organs of unborn babies throughout a pregnancy, and may cause damage that will not be evident for months or even years.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has advised that pregnant women should postpone travel to Zika-affected areas (visit [wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information) for a complete list) until they are no longer pregnant. Other travelers should also take precautions to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes if they are going to a Zika-affected area [www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/index.html). 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 not able to protect yourself from mosquito

bites

- using an EPA-registered insect repellent according to manufacturer's directions
- treating clothing and gear with permethrin or purchasing permethrin-treated items.

Those who have lived in or traveled to an area with Zika and have a pregnant partner should use condoms or other barrier methods the right way every time or abstain from sex for the duration of the 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.

To learn more, visit the NH Department of Health and Human Services website at [www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/zika/index.htm](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/zika/index.htm) or [www.cdc.gov/zika](http://www.cdc.gov/zika).

## Perfluorochemicals and Drinking Water Update

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) continues to test drinking water and ground water for perfluorochemicals (PFCs) around several sites in New Hampshire.

In April 2014, the three wells supplying drinking water to the Pease Tradeport were tested by the Air Force for perfluorochemicals (PFCs) for the first time at the request of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES). On May 12, 2014, the U.S. Air Force notified DES that water samples collected from the Haven well showed levels of perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) that were above the provisional health advisory (PHA) level set by the EPA at the time. Since then the EPA has set an exposure level of 70 parts per trillion (ppt) for PFOS, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), or both combined.

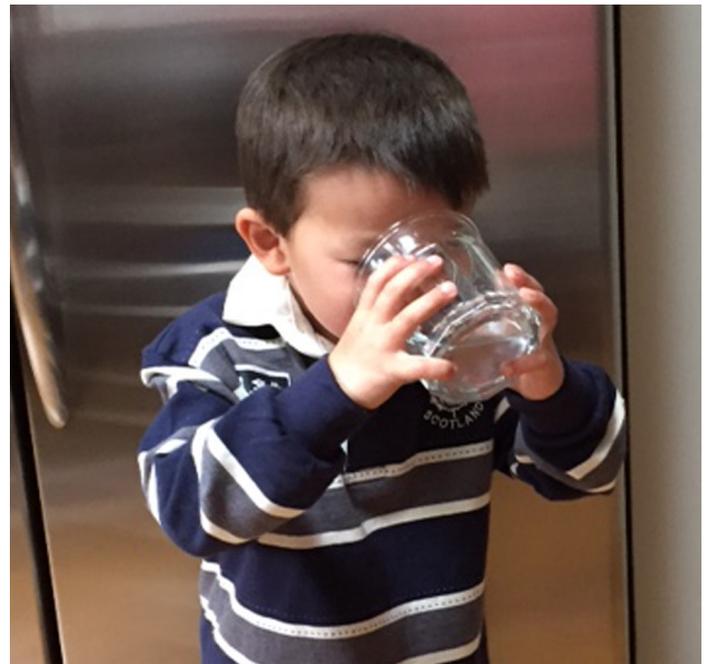
In March of 2016, the Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics Company notified DES that perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) was detected at low levels (0.03 micrograms per liter [ $\mu\text{g/L}$ ] or 30 parts per trillion) in samples taken from four water faucets within their Merrimack facility, which is served by the Merrimack Village District Water System. NHDES continues to investigate and test private and public water systems

near the St. Gobain plant and other sites of interest in the State, such as the former Merrimack Landfill and TCI in Amherst and Manchester. People whose well water tests above the 70 ppt level for PFOA and/or PFOS are being provided bottled water.

PFCs have been used for decades in a variety of industrial applications and consumer products, including manufacturing nonstick cookware and for surface protection for stain-resistant carpets, clothing, furniture, and food packaging, and in products to help them flow freely, such as paint, cleaning products, and certain firefighting foams.

PFCs have been found in soil, air, and water and do not break down easily in the environment. People are most likely exposed to PFCs by ingesting them through:

- eating foods that may contain high levels of PFCs (e.g., fish and shellfish),



- drinking contaminated water,
- eating food contaminated by packaging materials containing PFCs (e.g., popcorn bags, fast food containers, pizza boxes), or
- hand-to-mouth transfer from surfaces treated with PFC-containing stain protectants, such as carpets, which are thought to be most significant

in infants and toddlers.

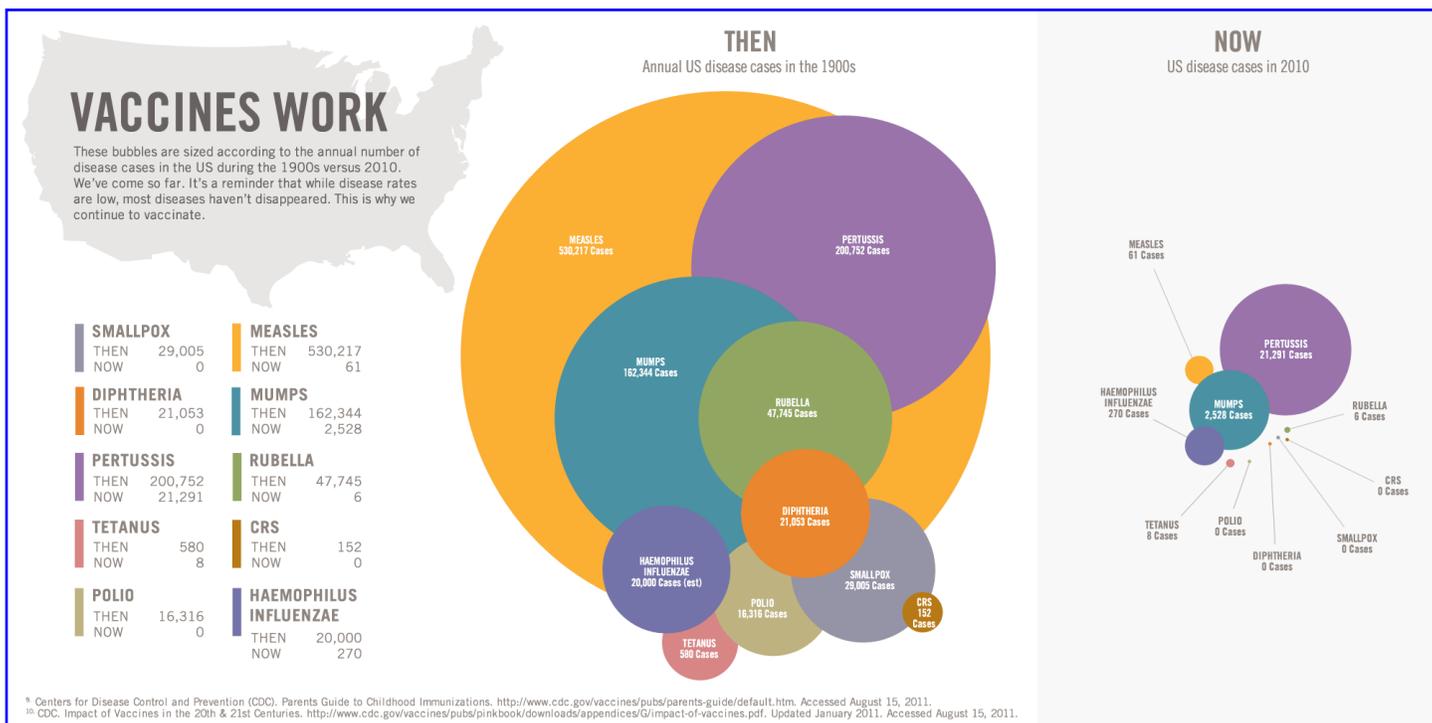
Studies show that nearly all people have PFCs in their blood, regardless of age. Some PFCs, including PFOA and PFOS, stay in the human body for many years. Some animal studies have shown adverse health effects from PFCs in animals, but this does not necessarily predict effects in people. While there are some studies that inconclusively suggest a relationship between PFC exposure and a health effect, there are also many studies looking at the same health outcome that do not show a relationship with PFC exposure. Given the inconsistent and sometimes contradictory findings in the medical literature, no one at this time can be sure about the health effects of PFCs in humans. More studies are needed to say whether PFCs cause health changes in people.

In response to the water contamination at Pease and

near the St. Gobain plant, the NH Department of Health and Human Services is offering blood testing for those who have been affected. If you have a contaminated well near St. Gobain or if you drank the water at the Pease Tradeport before the Haven well was shut down in May 2014 and would like to have your blood tested for PFOS and PFOA, please go [online to register](#) or call 603-271-9461.

If you are not affected by the investigation but would like to have your private well tested on your own, or to learn more about the investigation into contaminated drinking water, visit the [NH Department of Environmental Services](#). To read the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) information about the possible health effects of PFCs, visit the [Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry](#) site.

## Childhood 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 serious contagious diseases than immunization.

Vaccines are one of the best public health tools available to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. However, preventable illnesses, such as whooping cough (pertussis), measles, mumps, and chicken pox are once again on the rise throughout the country due to decreased vaccination rates.

# Public Health Notes

Volume 11 Issue 5

September–October 2016

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 years are provided at no cost. Make sure your child has a productive and safe school year. For more information, visit the DHHS Immunization Program at [www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov) or call them at 603-271-4482.



## National Preparedness Month

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

The theme of this year’s event is “Don’t Wait, Communicate. Make Your Emergency Plan Today.” The most important steps are to: (1) get or make an emergency kit, (2) make a plan, and (3) stay informed.

Your emergency kit, for either remaining in your

home for an extended period of time or evacuating, should contain:

- Enough food and water for at least 3 days for each member of the household
- Health supplies, including prescriptions
- Personal care items, including those for babies
- Safety supplies
- Flashlight and radio with batteries
- Cell phone with wall and car chargers
- Important documents
- Cash
- Pet supplies
- Extra car and house keys

What you actually put in your kit depends on your family size and each individual’s needs. Check the expiration dates on food, water, medicine, and batteries at least two times per year. It’s extremely important that all items in your kit are functional at the time of an emergency. Also, find out where your gas, electric, and water shut-off locations are, and how to turn them off.

You should also develop a plan in advance of how to communicate with your family during a disaster. How will you communicate with each other? Where will you meet up if you are out of contact? What about elderly relatives? Who will be the emergency contact so everyone stays in touch?

During a disaster it is important to keep updated on the situation since things can change quickly. To read more about making sure your family is prepared, go to [www.readynh.gov/](http://www.readynh.gov/), <https://emergency.cdc.gov/preparedness/>, and [www.fema.gov/plan-prepare](http://www.fema.gov/plan-prepare).



*Storms Ivan, Jeanne, Karl, and Lisa (left to right)—  
September 22, 2004*