

OVERSEEING THE HEALTH OF THE PUBLIC

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As local Board of Health members, you have a critical role in overseeing the health of the public. The policy direction and leadership you provide will help us achieve the state vision of healthy people in healthy communities. This newsletter from the Wisconsin Division of Public Health (DPH) is provided as a resource to you in this role.

Seth's Column



Swine Flu (H1N1): What Lies Ahead?

Beginning in April, local health departments and the State worked closely to help reduce the spread of the H1N1 flu that started in Mexico. Quickly finding, testing and talking to thousands of people placed a huge demand on public health departments. However, recent planning, increased laboratory ability, new Web-based disease reporting, and regular updates paid off in a big way. The Wisconsin public health system was one of the best in the nation at tracking the illness and determining how it spread.

At the end of the school year, the number of new cases dropped quickly. We expect a return in fall. Since most Americans lack immunity to the virus, this fall's flu season may be more severe than normal.

The months ahead bring many unknowns, but planning is focused on:

- **Giving Flu Shots.** In addition to the annual seasonal flu shot there will be a new H1N1 shot (two doses) available mid-fall or later. Early doses will be given to health workers and children (in part to keep the rest of the community safer), pregnant women, people with chronic diseases and young adults. We will also promote *seasonal* flu shots in early fall—more than ever!
- **Tracking.** We will closely track hospitalizations, deaths and drug resistance to adjust the way we control the disease.
- **Reducing the Spread.** Advice for schools, work places and homes will change as we gain experience. We will continue to suggest that people stay home while sick and wash their hands often. People may be asked to keep distance between themselves and others at work and play if the flu becomes more severe. Schools and businesses must plan for flu this fall.
- **Meeting the Healthcare Demand.** Autumn may see far more cases than spring. There will likely be more people at clinics and hospitals. Flu medications and supplies are being restocked. Managers will review staffing plans that consider high demand and increased sick leave.
- **Communicating.** We will continue to “push” urgent information with local health departments. Please regularly check <http://pandemic.wisconsin.gov>.

Public opinion polls show that the American people felt well informed, understood the disease, and felt public health did a good job. Your public health department, working as part of an efficient team, is responsible for this great success.

Breast Cancer Risk Factors

What affects your risk of getting breast cancer?

The causes of breast cancer are not fully known. However, researchers have identified a number of factors that increase one's chances of getting breast cancer. These are called risk factors. Risk factors are not necessarily causes of breast cancer, but are associated with an increased chance of getting breast cancer. Some women have many risk factors but never get breast cancer. Some women have few or no risk factors but do get the disease. Being a woman is the number one risk factor for breast cancer. Talk to your health care provider about your personal risk.

There are some risk factors you can control, and others you cannot. Remember, even if you do not have any of these risk factors, you can still develop breast cancer.

Factors that may increase your risk of breast cancer:

- ◆ A family history of breast cancer
- ◆ Having high breast density on a mammogram
- ◆ Getting older—the older you get, the greater your risk of breast cancer
- ◆ Being exposed to large amounts of radiation, such as having very frequent spine X-rays for scoliosis or treatment for Hodgkin's disease at a young age
- ◆ Starting menopause after age 55
- ◆ Being overweight after menopause or gaining weight as an adult
- ◆ Having more than one drink of alcohol per day



TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEALTH: GET YOUR SEASONAL FLU SHOT!

Board of Health Member resource: Do you want more information on your role as a Board of Health member? Go to the website at www.dhs.wi.gov/localhealth/BOHOrientation/index.htm. On this site are a variety of resources, training materials and contacts.

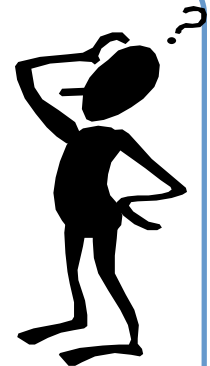
Did You Know:

September is:

- ◆ Baby Safety Awareness Month
- ◆ Cholesterol Education Month
- ◆ Healthy Aging Month
- ◆ Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month
- ◆ Sports & Home Eye Safety Month

October is:

- ◆ Brain Injury Awareness Month
- ◆ Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- ◆ Cancer Control Month
- ◆ Dental Hygiene Month
- ◆ Healthy Lung Month



For more information, contact your DPH Regional Office Director. Contact information available at: <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/localhealth/counties/regional.htm>