

# Public Health Notes

Volume 10 Issue 6

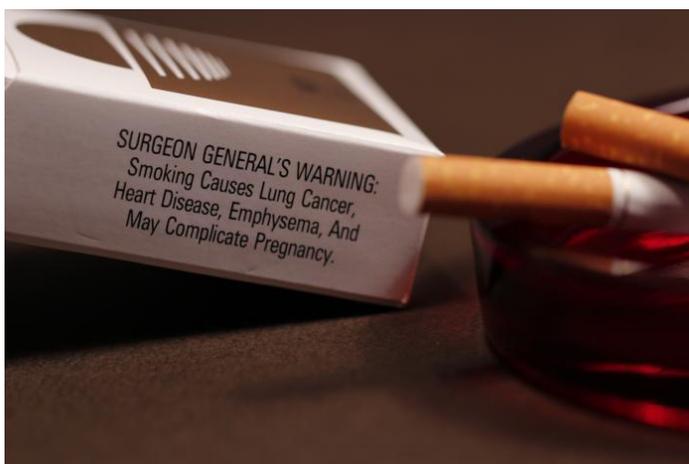
November-December 2015

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

## Tobacco Use: What Smoking Really Does to Your Health

Smoking remains the leading preventable cause of death in the United States. According to the 2014 Surgeon General's Report *The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress*, nearly all tobacco users start before 18 years of age.

Nicotine is a chemical stimulant found in combustible products, such as cigarettes and cigars. Stimulants are drugs that cause temporary improvements in mental or physical functions. When nicotine enters the brain it causes an increase in the level of dopamine, a neurotransmitter (chemical messenger) responsible for managing the pleasure center of the brain. Increasing dopamine levels overstimulate the nervous system and produce a feeling of well being, which strongly reinforces the behavior of smoking. As dopamine levels decrease, withdrawal occurs and the body feels cold, tired, and lacking in energy. Other withdrawal effects include feeling apathetic, being irritable, and having trouble focusing on tasks. This withdrawal process leaves the person needing to smoke to regain



### Important Dates

*November is National Diabetes Month*

American Diabetes Association

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

*November is Great American Smokeout Month*

American Cancer Society

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

*November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month*

American Cancer Society

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

*November is National Healthy Skin Month*

American Academy of Dermatology

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

*November is Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month*

Pancreatic Cancer Action Network

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

*November is Prematurity Awareness Month*

March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation

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

*November 14 is World Diabetes Day*

International Diabetes Federation

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

*November 19 is Great American Smokeout Day*

American Cancer Society

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

*November 21 is International Survivors of Suicide Day*

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

[www.afsp.org/survivorday](http://www.afsp.org/survivorday)

*December is International AIDS Awareness Month*

International HIV/AIDS Alliance

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

*December 1 is World AIDS Day*

[AIDS.gov](http://AIDS.gov)



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)



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

December 6–12 is National Hand Washing Awareness Week

Henry the Hand Foundation

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

December 6–12 is National Influenza Vaccination Week

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.cdc.gov/flu/nivw/](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/nivw/)

the positive feeling created by the nicotine. This is the same cycle that happens with any type of addictive substance or drug.

Smoking harms every organ in your body. It can lead to many types of cancer, such as of the larynx, esophagus, lungs, stomach, liver, pancreas, kidney, cervix, bladder, and colon. Smoking also contributes to many chronic diseases, such as stroke, cataracts, macular degeneration, periodontitis, aortic aneurysm, coronary artery disease, pneumonia, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, diabetes, reduced fertility in women, erectile dysfunction in men, hip fractures, and rheumatoid arthritis.

Secondhand smoke (breathing in the smoke from someone else who is smoking) also causes serious health problems. In children it can lead to ear infections, more frequent and severe asthma attacks, and coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath. In adults it can cause heart disease, lung cancer, and stroke. It is estimated that secondhand smoke caused nearly 34,000 adult heart disease deaths in the United States between 2005 and 2009. It is also the cause of approximately 7,300 lung cancer deaths during the same years.

To learn more, visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.cdc.gov) or the NH Department of Health and Human Services, [Tobacco Prevention and Control Program](http://www.nh.gov) site to read the report *Tobacco Use in New Hampshire: Prevalence, Health Consequences, and Strategies to Reduce Use* and other materials.

In New Hampshire, 1-800-QUIT-NOW is the gateway to tobacco cessation services offered to residents. The toll-free Helpline offers telephone-

based counseling, free print materials and referrals to local tobacco treatment programs.

## Great American Smokeout (GASO) - Nov. 19

Every year the third Thursday of November is the Great American Smokeout, a day set aside by the American Cancer Society to try to encourage people who use tobacco products to quit. They may use that date to make a plan to quit, to quit on that day, or to quit for a day, in the hopes that it will be the beginning of the end of their tobacco use. In NH call 1-800 QUIT-NOW or self-refer via the web to the NH Tobacco Helpline's website ([www.TryToStopNH.org](http://www.TryToStopNH.org)). Or get more information about [GASO](#).

## Flu Season

It's flu season again! Time for coughing, fever, and body aches. The NH Public Health Labs identified their first positive sample in September. Flu season runs from October through June, but it is unpredictable.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the flu causes millions of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations, and thousands of deaths every season. There is something you can do though. The best and most effective way to prevent influenza is with a yearly vaccine. Here is why



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it is important for everyone 6 months of age and older to get the flu vaccine annually:

- The strains of the flu that are circulating change every year
- To deal with this, the CDC evaluates what strains should be in each year's vaccine and frequently recommends changes
- Immunity (the body's ability to fight off an illness) decreases over time and a flu vaccine is only estimated to be effective for about 9 months.
- Influenza is a viral disease that can be mild to severe and result in serious complications.

Some people are more at risk for severe illness or flu complications than others, including:

- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- Adults 65 years of age and older
- Pregnant women (and women up to two weeks post-partum)
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- American Indians and Alaskan Natives seem to be at higher risk of flu complications
- People with certain medical conditions including:
  - › Asthma
  - › Neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions [including disorders of the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerve, and muscle such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy (seizure disorders), stroke, intellectual disability, moderate to severe developmental delay, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury].
  - › Chronic lung disease (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease [COPD] and cystic fibrosis)
  - › Heart disease (such as congenital heart disease, congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease)
  - › Blood disorders (such as sickle cell disease)
  - › Endocrine disorders (such as diabetes)
  - › Kidney disorders
  - › Liver disorders
  - › Metabolic disorders (such as inherited metabolic disorders and mitochondrial disorders)



- › Weakened immune system due to disease or medication (such as people with HIV or AIDS, or cancer, or those on chronic steroids)
- › People younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- › People who are morbidly obese ([calculate your Body Mass Index](#) or BMI, to check if it is 40 or greater).

There are some people, however, who should not receive a flu vaccine:

- People with a severe allergy to chicken eggs
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past
- People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome within 6 weeks of a previous influenza vaccination
- Children younger than 6 months
- People who have a moderate to severe illness with a fever should wait to be vaccinated until their symptoms resolve.

The flu vaccine is safe and cannot give you the flu. For more information about the flu, visit <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/influenza/index.htm>. To find a flu vaccine, visit your healthcare provider, a local drug store, or visit <http://vaccine.healthmap.org/> and type in your zip code.

## Foodborne Illnesses

Foodborne illnesses are a concern year round, but because the holidays usually involve family gatherings and plenty of food, they can be more common this time of year. Some of the most prevalent foodborne illnesses

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include Salmonella, E. coli, Campylobacter, norovirus, and listeriosis. Foodborne illnesses can cause symptoms ranging from mild stomach upset to vomiting to kidney failure and even death, depending on the illness, the severity of the infection, and the health of the person infected. There are an estimated 76 million cases of foodborne illness, 325,000 hospitalizations, and 5,000 deaths each year in the United States due to foodborne disease.

The good news though is that foodborne illnesses can all be prevented through the proper handling and cooking of all foods. There are some simple precautions every cook should take, not just during the holidays, to reduce the possibility of becoming sick when preparing food, which include:

**Separate:** Use a separate cutting board for cooked foods and one for raw foods and always wash them after each use. Avoid cross contamination, which is when cooked food comes into contact with raw food or something the raw food has touched, thus contaminating the cooked food. Wash any utensil (knife, spoon, spatula, etc.) with hot soapy water after preparing one food item before going on to the next.

**Clean:** Always wash your hands before touching any food. Wash your hands and surfaces (counters, cutting boards) often during food preparation and afterward. Always wash hands when moving from handling raw foods to cooked foods. Use hot soapy water.

**Cook:** Make sure all meats are thoroughly cooked by using a meat thermometer: turkey, stuffing, and casseroles to 165°F; veal, beef, and lamb roasts to 145°F; and ham, pork, ground beef, and egg dishes to 160°F. When reheating, leftovers should be thoroughly heated to 165°F.

**Chill:** Refrigerate or freeze leftovers within two hours (one hour if the room temperature is over 80°F). The refrigerator should be maintained at 40°F or lower and the freezer should be at 0°F or lower. Keep hot foods hot, 140°F or hotter, and cold foods cold, 40°F or below. Never defrost food at room temperature, because this allows bacteria to grow. Thaw food in the

refrigerator, in a cold-water bath, or in the microwave. When using a microwave for defrosting, meat must be cooked immediately afterward. Marinate foods in the refrigerator.

**Report:** Report suspected foodborne illnesses to the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services by calling 603-271-4496. Often calls from concerned citizens are how outbreaks are first detected. If a public health official calls you to talk about an outbreak, your cooperation is very important, even if you are not ill.

**Avoid:** You should not consume unpasteurized milk or apple juice because of the risk of Salmonella, E. coli, Listeriosis, and other illnesses. You should also not eat raw or runny eggs, unless they have been pasteurized, due to the risk of Salmonella. You should also avoid eating raw and undercooked meat and poultry.

For questions about food safety, call the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services, Food Protection Section at 603-271-4589. To report a foodborne outbreak, contact the Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 603-271-4496 or 1-800-852-3345 x4496. For more information visit the U.S. Department of Agriculture at [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), the food safety resource center at [www.befoodsafe.org](http://www.befoodsafe.org), or the NH Department of Health and Human Services website at [www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov).

