

# Public Health Notes

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

## Fruits and Veggies: How to Get More in Your Diet

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has declared September Fruits and Veggies—More Matters Month and it is also time for back to school. There has been a great deal of emphasis on obesity and childhood obesity lately and eating more fruits and vegetables and less junk food is a great way to lose weight and get healthier.

Fruits and vegetables should make up a large portion of your diet, but eating enough of them is not always easy, with our busy schedules, tight budgets, junk food temptations, and picky eaters. Here are some tips to help:

- Keep cut up or bite sized fruits and vegetables handy for snacks, such as cherry tomatoes, celery, apples, and cucumber.
- Pack a breakfast to go: add fruit to a low-fat yogurt.
- Keep bags of cut up lettuce on hand for quick salad making
- Add more vegetables to sandwiches, such as cucumber, pickles, olives, onions, and radishes.
- Put less cereal in your bowl and add more fruit, such as strawberries, blueberries, banana, or peaches.
- Pack a 100% juice box in your child's lunchbox instead of soda or whole milk.
- Put fruits and veggies in lunchboxes for snacks, such as cut up carrots, applesauce cups, slices of pepper and hummus dip, or dried fruit.
- Substitute veggies for one of the eggs in your omelet.
- Add a cup of fresh, frozen or canned vegetable to your favorite soup.

For more information visit <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/> or the NH Department of Health and Human Services website at [www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov).



### Important Dates

September is Fruits and Veggies—More Matters Month  
September is National Cholesterol Education Month  
September is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month  
September 5-11 is National Suicide Prevention Week  
September 21 is World Alzheimer's Day  
September 28 is World Rabies Day  
October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month  
October is National Dental Hygiene Month  
October is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Awareness Month  
October 23-31 is Red Ribbon Week  
October 7 is National Depression Screening Day  
October 16 is World Food Day  
October 20 is World Osteoporosis Day  
October 22 is National Mammography Day



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## Vaccines for the Start of School

It's that time of year again: the start of a new school year. That means new clothes, new school supplies, and new teachers. There is one more thing kids should get before they head back to school: their vaccines. There is no better way to protect your children from potentially deadly contagious diseases than immunization.

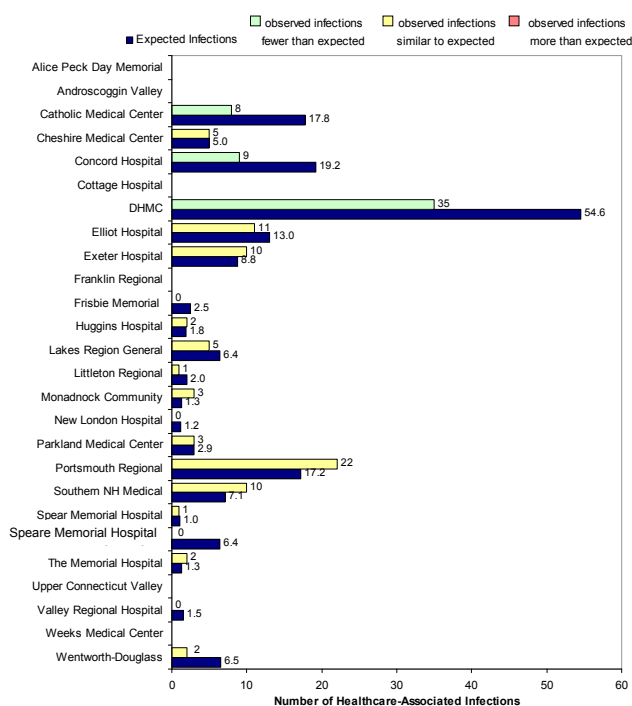
Certain illnesses are appearing more frequently in the United States lately after years of decline. New Hampshire law requires that elementary school children be vaccinated against nine communicable diseases including: diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, and chickenpox. So take these important steps to make sure your child is protected:

- Call your child's medical provider
- Verify that 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](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov) or call them at 603-271-4482.



Overall healthcare-associated infections standardized infection ratios, January 1-December 31, 2009



Note: Data are not shown for hospitals with fewer than one expected infection. Observed number of infections includes all infections that are required to be reported (central line-associated bloodstream infections and surgical site infections following coronary artery bypass, colon, and knee arthroplasty procedures).

## Healthcare-Associated Infections

The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services released the first State Healthcare-Associated Infections (HAIs) Report based on data provided by the 31 hospitals in the State. This report, mandated by law, is the first in what will be an annual report and looks at central line-associated bloodstream infections, central line insertion practices, surgical site infections following heart, colon, and knee surgeries, and staff influenza vaccination rates.

A total of 134 HAIs were reported during 2009, representing 110 surgical site infections and 24 central line-associated bloodstream infections. The overall observed number of HAIs in New Hampshire hospitals was 26% lower than expected based on national data.

“We are highly encouraged that fewer infections were reported than expected,” said Dr. José Montero, Director of Public Health at the Division of Public Health Services. “Since this information has never been collected before it is reassuring that no systemic problems were detected. Certainly there is room for improvement, the goal being to eliminate HAIs, so we will be working with the hospitals on this initiative.”

To view the entire report go to [www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov).

## Obesity: New Hampshire's Rate Climbs

The rate of obesity in New Hampshire has reached 25.7%. This means that about one in every four New Hampshire citizens is extremely overweight. This result is from a survey done by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The report, entitled "State-Specific Obesity Prevalence Among Adults—United States, 2009," states that no state met the Healthy People 2010 goal of a rate below 15% and nine states had an obesity rate above 30%, which is up from no states in 2000 and three states in 2005.

"These numbers are very concerning," said Dr. José Montero, Director of Public Health at the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). "As a nation and a state we are getting heavier and heavier; both the individual health consequences and the strain on our economy and healthcare system are tremendous."

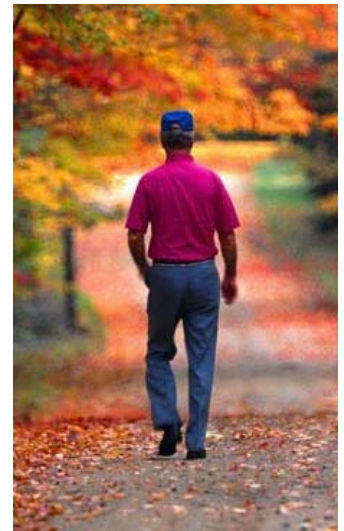
The study points out that people who are obese incur \$1,429 per person extra in medical costs each year compared with people of normal weight, and that the nation's total medical costs of obesity were \$147 billion.

"Combatting obesity is a complex problem," continued Montero. "While we know it requires eating healthier and being active on most days, helping people to get there is the key. In New Hampshire we have been working on a number of initiatives to assist people in making better choices and taking steps to live healthier, but to reverse this epidemic we need to change our communities into places that support healthy eating and active living."

The New Hampshire obesity prevention plan, Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL), has been in place for over two years, and DHHS is working with State and federal partners to implement the Health Care Reform Act, which includes such steps as requiring menu labeling. The HEAL initiative is helping communities to become healthier, such as adding walking trails, encouraging parents to allow children to bike or walk to school, encouraging healthy options in school vending machines, and creating incentives for restaurants and food retailers to provide healthier options for customers.

"The reversal of this epidemic will not happen over night," said Montero, "but it must happen and it is going to take all of us making changes, encouraging our neighborhoods and communities to change, and teaching ourselves and our children about a healthier lifestyle."

The measurement used by the CDC and others to determine obesity is body mass index (BMI). This is a proportion of a person's height to their weight. To calculate your BMI go to <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/>. For more information on obesity and the report go to [www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov).



## Breastfeeding: The Importance of a Healthy Start



While New Hampshire moms generally have a good rate of breastfeeding, the goal is for 100% of women to at least begin breastfeeding their babies after birth. Both babies and mothers gain many benefits from breastfeeding. Breast milk is easy to digest and contains antibodies that can protect infants from bacterial and viral infections. Research indicates that women who breastfeed may have lower rates of certain breast and ovarian cancer. Breast milk is the best food for infants and contains everything they need in the first few months.

For more information visit the New Hampshire DHHS Maternal and Child Health Program at <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/DHHS/MCH/default.htm> or call them at 603-2714517. Also visit [www.womenshealth.gov/](http://www.womenshealth.gov/) for Breastfeeding/index.cfm?page=227 for important tips.