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Public Health Nurse Newsletter



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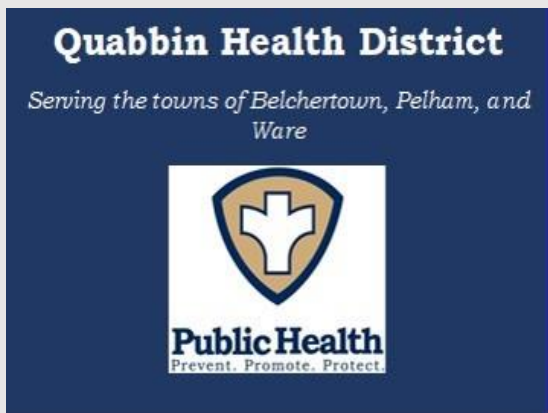
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Fun fact – the first celebration of New Year’s Eve in Times Square happened in 1904 and commemorated the opening of the new headquarters of *The New York Times*. The first “ball drop” occurred in 1907 because the city banned fireworks. Adolph Ochs, the owner of *The New York Times*, decided to drop a 700-pound steel and iron ball from the top of the newspapers’ office building at midnight, and the tradition was born!

As of the week of December 17th – 23rd, the current estimated severity of influenza in Massachusetts is **High**. The most common flu strain is Type A. There is still time to prevent severe illness – only about 36.8% of Massachusetts residents have gotten their flu vaccine. For each town in Quabbin Health District, 28.3% of Ware residents, 39.8% of Belchertown residents, and 50.4% of Pelham residents have currently been vaccinated for influenza. There are still standard dose flu vaccines in the public health nurse office if you are interested, or they can be obtained at your local pharmacy. Good handwashing, cleaning/sanitizing high touch areas, and either staying home when you are sick or wearing a mask when you must be within 6 feet of your family members, colleagues, or in public spaces are all ways to minimize spread of illness.



About Cervical Cancer:

Anyone with a cervix can develop cervical cancer - those with risk factors have a higher chance of developing the disease. The cervix connects the upper part of the vagina with the uterus.

Cervical cancer is one of the few cancers that has precancerous cells (cells that are not yet cancerous) that can be treated to prevent the development of cervical cancer. Early detection combined with treatment prevents cervical cancer.

Risk Factors:

The primary risk factors for developing cervical cancer include being sexually active, persistent HPV infection, using tobacco products, and missing or avoiding regular screenings.

HPV (Human Papilloma Virus):

HPV causes over 90% of all cervical cancers. Many people will be exposed to HPV at some time in their lives and their immune systems are usually able to clear the infection. However, some cannot and have persistent HPV infection that can cause cervical cancer.

There are 12 types of HPV that are considered high-risk for developing cancer and they are all detectable with regular pap screenings. Persistent HPV infections are treatable if caught early. HPV can cause six types of cancer: vulvar, vaginal, cervical, anal, oropharyngeal (throat), and penile.

Symptoms of cervical cancer:

Pelvic pain, unusual or unexplained vaginal bleeding – especially if it occurs outside of a normal menstrual period.

Preventing cervical cancer:

- HPV vaccination protects against the types of high-risk HPV that cause cancer. Getting the vaccine before becoming sexually active is the best way to prevent HPV infection. The vaccine works best if given between ages 9 and 12.
- Avoid using tobacco products – tobacco is known to cause many types of cancer, including cervical.
- Always use condoms and dental dams during all types of sexual activity.
- If you are sexually active, get tested regularly for STDs and STIs including HIV/AIDS – infection with other illnesses can lower your immune system's ability to clear HPV.
- Begin pap screening regularly at age 21, prior if you are sexually active before age 21 (anyone classified as female at birth):
 - 21-29 years old: Pap test every 3 years
 - 30-65 years old: Pap test every 3 years, Pap test with HPV test every 5 years, HPV test every 5 years
 - Over age 65: If you followed screening guidelines earlier, you do not need cervical cancer screening. Instead, know the symptoms and report them to your medical provider right away

On December 31, 1969, President Richard Nixon designated January as National Blood Donor Month. This observance is intended to encourage people to give blood and honor those who have donated.

The winter months are a time of decreased donations and increased risk of shortages – due to the holidays, weather, and respiratory illness season. This is a great time to consider donating blood – whether you have in the past or for the first time!

NATIONAL
BLOOD
DONOR
MONTH



Please contact one of the following organizations to find a local blood collection site and to schedule an appointment:

- AABB: www.WhereToDonateBlood.org; +1.301.907.6977
- America’s Blood Centers: www.americasblood.org; +1.202.393.5725
- American Red Cross: www.RedCrossBlood.org; +1.800.RED CROSS (+1.800.733.2767)

Facts about blood donation:

Every 2 seconds, a person in American needs a blood transfusion

65% of the American population is eligible to donate blood, but only 3% currently donate (almost 7 million people)

Less than 20% of blood donations are from individuals in communities of color

Donations from those aged 19-24 have decreased almost 32% from 2019 to 2021

The need for blood donations extends beyond unexpected emergencies or trauma.

Blood donations help those who undergo some cancer therapies, some surgeries, have organ or one marrow transplants, and those with sickle cell disease or thalassemia (among others)