



Health Matters

a monthly publication of the
Farmington Valley Health District
April 2019

Serving the towns of:

Avon
Barkhamsted
Canton
Colebrook
East Granby
Farmington
Granby
Hartland
New Hartford
Simsbury

Spring Means Warm Weather, Outdoor Activities, Tulips andTicks!

As spring arrives it is important to protect yourself and your family from tick bites that can spread disease. In 2017 the Farmington Valley Health District had 102 Lyme disease cases and our rate per 100,000 population was three times higher than the state rate. In fact, it is likely that this number is far greater as many people with Lyme go undiagnosed and/or unreported. The most common ticks in the Farmington Valley are the black-legged tick, also known as the deer tick, and the American dog tick. The most common tick-borne illness in our area is Lyme disease, transmitted through the bite of the deer tick. Twenty-five percent of deer ticks are infected with Lyme but depending on location, this can range from a low of 10% to a high of 40%. (CT Agricultural Experiment Station)

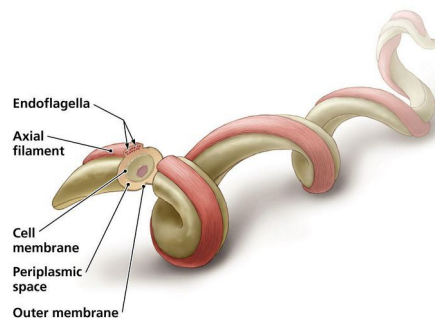
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The deer tick can also transmit anaplasmosis, babesiosis and Powassan disease although these are less common. Deer ticks are most common in the woods where their hosts, the white-tailed deer, live. However, many people affected by Lyme report exposures in their yards.



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Lyme disease-spirochete corkscrew shaped bacteria

There are things that can be done

to reduce tick populations in yards:

- Remove leaf litter, ticks need humidity and leaf litter is an excellent source of moisture;
- Keep grass mowed;
- Restrict ground covers like Pachysandra especially in areas where the family or children spend time;
- Place wood piles away from the house and play areas;
- Discourage deer from large areas with fencing;
- Reduce and or eliminate Japanese barberry that serve as an excellent host for mice and chipmunks that are a reservoir for Lyme disease.

In addition to reducing tick populations in the yard, everyone should take precautions when spending time outdoors to reduce tick bites. Ticks do not jump, fly or drop from trees—they grasp passing hosts from the leaf litter or tips of grass. Most ticks are picked up on the lower legs and travel on the human body before biting their hosts. Insect repellents containing DEET are most effective at preventing tick bites. Products containing 20-30% DEET used on clothing are 86-92% effective at preventing tick bites. ALWAYS use insect repellents according to the manufacturer label. For those that spend a lot of time in the woods, clothing that is impregnated with repellents have been shown to be highly effective.

Wearing light colored clothing and tucking pants into socks allows for easier identification of ticks and provides a barrier for ticks trying to get onto skin. After returning from being outside, immediately remove clothing and wash and dry them. Ticks can survive a wash cycle but are far less likely to survive the heat of a dryer. This will prevent ticks from being introduced into the home. Shower and do tick checks shortly after returning inside. Tick checks are one of the most important strategies for reducing tick-related disease transmission.

The deer tick is incredibly small, in fact the nymphal stage, most commonly associated with disease transmission is smaller than the head of a pin. This makes it more difficult to spot during tick checks. The risk of disease transmission from a tick to a human increases as the number of hours the tick is attached increases. There is a 20% probability of infection at 48 hours of attachment and increases dramatically after that. Do tick checks more than once following time outdoors. Remember, you can still significantly reduce your risk if a tick is found and removed within 48 hours of attachment.



Early signs of Lyme disease include an expanding red rash and flu-like symptoms including fatigue, fever and muscle aches. Seventy to 80% of individuals infected with Lyme will experience a localized red rash within 2-32 days after a bite. These are generally 5-6 inches in diameter or larger. Because the rash may occur as much as one month following a bite, people may not associate it with the tick bite. This makes it difficult for some to get early treatment. Diagnosis of Lyme disease is based on both signs and symptoms of the disease as well as possible exposure to the deer tick. In addition, for those experiencing symptoms, CDC currently recommends a two-step process to test blood for evidence of antibodies against the Lyme disease bacteria. About 60% of people that are not treated for Lyme after a tick bite may experience arthritis and severe joint pain and swelling. A small percentage of those untreated may experience chronic neurological

issues including problems with short term memory, numbness or tingling of the hands or feet and shooting pains. If you are bitten by a tick and experience any of the symptoms associated with Lyme disease, contact your physician.

Additional information about Lyme Disease can be found at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/index.html>

<https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Infectious-Diseases/Tickborne/Lyme-Disease>

<https://portal.ct.gov/CAES>

Public Health Achievements Save Millions of Lives



In the beginning of the 20th century vaccine preventable diseases devastated the population by causing infirmity and death. Many important public health achievements during the 1900's contributed to a 30 year gain in life expectancy since that time. The development of vaccines helped to eradicate deadly diseases including smallpox and polio and significantly reduce the spread of measles, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria and other infectious diseases. Motor-vehicle safety including seat belts save thousands of lives each year. The advent of occupational safety and health guidelines helped to protect workers and children from unsafe conditions in factories and workplaces. Tobacco regulations that limited access to children and restricted smoking in public places have resulted in considerable decline in smoking rates and subsequent illness and death.

This month the world will recognize National Public Health Week. An excellent time to reflect on the greatest public health achievements of the century!

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognize the following as 10 of the most important achievements in Public Health:

- Immunizations
- Motor Vehicle Safety
- Workplace Safety
- Control of Infectious Disease
- A Decline in Deaths from Heart Disease and Stroke
- Safer & Healthier Foods
- Healthier Mothers & Babies
- Family Planning

- Fluoridation of Drinking Water to Prevent Cavities
- A Reduction in the Use of Tobacco

These achievements represent what public health is at its core. Public health is the prevention of disease and a subsequent improvement in quality of life and increase in average life span for an entire community.

While we celebrate these successes, public health must remain vigilant as the threats to public health are ever evolving. In the US today we are seeing for the first time since World War 2 a decline in life expectancy because of new and emerging health threats including chronic diseases, the opioid crisis and suicide.

The Farmington Valley Health District is working hard to keep pace with these emerging issues by tracking and monitoring disease within our communities, developing, testing and updating emergency response plans, conducting inspections to protect the public from food borne illnesses and other environmental hazards, educating the public about emerging health threats including vaping, building community partnerships to magnify our reach and promoting policies that support good health.

This month the Farmington Valley Health District celebrates the team that works hard to keep our 10 towns safe!



Is Your Home Healthy?

We spend more than half of our lives in our homes. Whether it's time sleeping, time spent with family, friends or pets, doing household chores, or maybe even working - our homes are an important environment.

While we don't give much thought to whether the home environment is healthy or safe, unhealthy homes can lead to illness, disease or injury. A healthy home can support health and well-being.



There are simple things that you can do to ensure that your home environment is safe and supports good health.

- Test for radon;
- If your home was built before 1978, consider the presence of lead before doing any home remodeling;
- Fix any leaking pipes and reduce humidity which can promote mold growth;
- Install and maintain smoke and carbon monoxide detectors;
- Use environmentally friendly cleaning products and store properly to reduce the chemicals introduced into the home;
- Keep a working fire extinguisher accessible;
- If you have a private well, periodically test the quality of your water;
- Maintain your furnace, air conditioning units and change filters as appropriate.

The Farmington Valley Health District can provide more information on any of these topics.

Watch one of our latest Health Matters episodes to hear our Director and Chief Sanitarian discuss how you can keep your home healthy

[Healthy Homes YouTube Video](#)

Work Place Wellness



Did you know that according to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), full-time employed Americans spend on average 1/3 of their day, 5 days a week in their workplace? This is a considerable portion of a person's life! Providing healthy lifestyle choices and a supportive environment in the workplace can be beneficial to both the employee and the employer!

With more than 75% of health care costs in the US due to chronic health conditions – many of which are preventable-- the workplace becomes a very important environment for adopting policies that promote good health and creating conditions that support healthy choices. There are very tangible benefits for employers as well. Studies have shown that promoting employee wellness can result in:

- Improved employee morale;
- Reduced employee turnover;
- Increased recruitment potential;
- Reduced absenteeism;

- Reduced healthcare costs;
- Improved employee health.

Commonly asked Questions:

Q: Is it hard to provide a workplace wellness program in my small business? I only employ 5 people.

A: Any workplace can adopt a healthier work environment. FVHD makes this easy with our adaptable and accessible Workplace Wellness Program!

Q: Doesn't a workplace wellness program cost thousands of dollars? I can't afford to invest this in a program.

A: Promoting wellness in the workplace can be as easy as offering a break room with microwave and refrigerator to encourage healthy eating. It can be about adopting a healthy snack policy for meetings, a breastfeeding policy, providing flu shots, or creating walking clubs.

Q: How do I start?

A: Contact FVHD to learn more about our Workplace Wellness Program – it's as simple as a phone call! 860-352-2333

Providing a good work life balance is essential to healthy, happy employees!



You can help prevent pill abuse and theft by ridding your home of potentially dangerous expired, unused, and unwanted prescription drugs. Bring your pills for disposal in boxes that are secured in the lobby of designated police departments and are accessible anytime the department is open. The service is **free and anonymous**, no questions asked and all the unwanted medications will be safely and securely destroyed.

The Farmington Valley Health District is encouraging everyone to participate in National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day on Saturday, April 27th. The initiative is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice and aims to provide a safe, convenient, and responsible means of disposing of prescription drugs and to educate the general public about the potential for abuse of medications.

Farmington Valley drop off sites include The Simsbury, Farmington and Canton Police Departments.

April 27

HEALTH PROGRAMMING IN YOUR DISTRICT



**A MATTER OF
BALANCE**

MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT FALLS

Matter of Balance
Starting April 4th, 2019
Every Thursday for 8 weeks
 10-12:30pm

Canton Senior Center

Are you an adult who is worried about falling? Join us for an 8 week course where we explore our fears about falling, and demonstrate exercises to strengthen our muscles.

This workshop can help you be in control and feel better.

To Register Call Canton Senior Services: (860) 693-5811

NOT TOO LATE TO TEST FOR RADON!!



The District still has a limited supply of FREE radon test kits.

Kits can be picked up at our office: 95 River Road, Canton from 8:00-4:00 M-F, closed between 12-1.



Resilience Grows Here: Month of the Military Child

April is the Month of the Military Child! Recognizing the sacrifices and resilience of the children who are raised in military families is aligned with the mission of Resilience Grows Here! These children endure the stressors of being uprooted due to frequent, Permanent Changes of Station (PCS). According to the Dept. of Defense, "The average child in a military family will move 6 to 9 times during a school career. That's an average of 3 times more frequently than non-military families." Multiple and long absences of their parents being deployed or attending training exercises also take a toll. These adverse conditions often affect their academic performance and cause trauma when they must repeatedly leave friends and extended family. Further complications are faced if their parent returns home wounded or not at all.

We salute all children raised in Military Families who serve our nation in support of their family service member. Their strength to endure and their ability to adapt and lead resilient lifestyles are to be commended and celebrated!

I am a military child.
Where am I from? I'm a child of the world.
I bloom anywhere. I am on an incredible journey.
I know once we leave here, I will probably not walk this way again.
I'm an uprooted child. My life is mostly in brown boxes.
One more time again I'm going to say goodbye to all that I know.
At this moment, I don't belong anywhere:
Not in this place, and not in the new place I'm moving to.
It's a puzzle of a thousand pieces that has been turned upside down. Its up to you to put
the puzzle back together again.
I'm leaving behind all that is familiar, again. I'm facing the unknown one more time.
My roots are short. Unexpected separations. Saying goodbye to friends.
Some lessons are harder than others. But at the end, I have yet another success story. I'm
flexible.
I'm not going to bend out of shape.
Being strong is the only choice I have. I'm walking this path.
We are heading to a bright future together as a family and as a nation. I proudly contribute
to the peace and freedom we all enjoy.
Sleep peaceably in your beds at night United States of America.
My family and I got your back.
-Laura Marin, 11, Military Child



The health department strives to prevent disease outbreaks and conditions that give rise to poor health, promote health programs and policies that support good health, and protect members of our community from health threats.

