



Health Matters

a monthly publication of the
Farmington Valley Health District
June 2021

Serving the towns of:

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Welcome Back!

The Farmington Valley Health District is pleased to bring you the return of Health Matters, our monthly electronic newsletter covering all things Public Health. We are your local health district serving the towns of Avon, Barkhamsted, Canton, Colebrook, East Granby, Farmington, Granby, Hartland, New Hartford, and Simsbury.

The past year has been full of challenges for all of us, as we navigated the many uncertainties that the COVID pandemic presented. All lives have been touched whether you are a worker working from home, a parent supporting children learning remotely, a family member unable to see loved ones, a healthcare provider caring for the sick, or a member of the community dealing with new stressors and demands in a rapidly changing environment.

The Farmington Valley Health District has been working tirelessly throughout the pandemic to provide public health leadership and guidance to our communities. Throughout the pandemic we have conducted ongoing surveillance and tracking to keep our town officials, emergency managers and others up to date on the number of new cases, positivity rates and deaths. We have provided subject matter expertise to businesses, schools and other community-based agencies and organizations to help slow the spread of the virus. Staff conducted contact tracing for positive cases and provided guidance on isolation and quarantine. In December, the District began vaccination clinics and to date have administered more than 20,000 COVID vaccines working in collaboration with our community partners and an army of

As conditions with the pandemic improve, we want to thank each and every one of you for your patience and cooperation during the pandemic. It has not been an easy year. The Farmington Valley has experienced 5,598 cases and has lost 224 members of our community to COVID-19 since March 2020. However, with vaccination rates for persons 15 years and older approaching 75% and case rates of less than 1 per 100,000, a brighter future is on the horizon. We could not have turned this corner without the cooperation of all of you! Thank you for wearing your masks, staying home when you were sick, quarantining if you were exposed and heading the advice of public health leaders.

The Staff of the Farmington Valley Health District are proud of the work we have accomplished throughout the pandemic and look forward to continuing our work 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.



Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States. Fortunately it is also one of the most preventable. Basal and squamous cell skin cancers are the most common and are highly curable but can be disfiguring. Melanoma is less common but accounts for the most skin cancer deaths. Almost 90% of non-melanoma cancers and 85% of melanoma skin cancers are associated with exposure to ultra violet light, specifically the sun and tanning beds. Protecting skin from the harmful effects of the ultraviolet light is critically important to preventing skin cancer.

Protect Yourself and Your Family:

Shade:

- Seek out shady spaces particularly between 10am and 4pm when the sun is at its hottest.
- Keep newborns under 6 months out of the sun entirely.

Clothing:

- Wear a hat and light long sleeve shirt especially when spending extended time outdoors.
- Avoid tanning and never use UV tanning beds.
- Use swimming tops for children or all in one swimming suits to provide maximum protection.
- Wear sunglasses to protect eyes.

Use a broad spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen:

- Use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher every day.
- For extended outdoor activity, use a water-resistant, broad spectrum (UVA/UVB)

sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher.

- Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going outside and reapply after swimming or excessive sweating. Follow the manufacturer instructions.
- Pay attention to expiration dates, old product may be less effective.

Early Detection is Critical:

- Do regular head to toe self-skin checks
- Consult your doctor if you have a new or changing skin mark
- Schedule periodic evaluation with a dermatologist

Recognize the Warning Signs

<https://www.skincancer.org/skin-cancer-information/melanoma/melanoma-warning-signs-and-images/do-you-know-your-abcdes>

A - Asymmetry		When a lesion or mark is not symmetrical it is a warning sign of melanoma
B - Border		Smooth, even borders are more likely to be benign, irregular jagged borders are a warning sign.
C - Color		Uniform color of a mark is more likely to be benign, a variety of colors is a warning sign. Melanomas can be red, blue or white as well.
D - Diameter		Benign moles usually have a smaller diameter than malignant ones.
E - Evolving		Benign moles tend to look the same over time. Be aware of changing or evolving moles and consult your health care adviser to have a skin check.

Learning how to perform a self-skin monthly check will help you to identify any changes in your skin early, so that you can consult your healthcare professional for a more intensive skin exam. Remember to have a loved one look at your back and other areas that are difficult to see. Remember skin cancer is the most common and curable form of cancer in the USA – but it needs to be found and treated early. Reducing exposure to UV light is the most important form of protection for you and your family – so enjoy the summer responsibly and remember to do your monthly skin checks.

If you are concerned about any markings on your skin, please see your medical provider and make sure that you have a full skin exam.

To learn more about sun safety and skin cancer view our *Health Matters* Episode: <https://youtu.be/XPR8KejXUPY>



The State of Connecticut Mosquito Management Program has announced this month that it is monitoring mosquitoes for the presence of viruses that can cause illness in people, including West Nile virus (WNV) and eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) virus.

[Source](#)

The mosquito trapping and testing program, coordinated by The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES), will begin June 1 until the end of October. The first test results will be available the week of June 7.

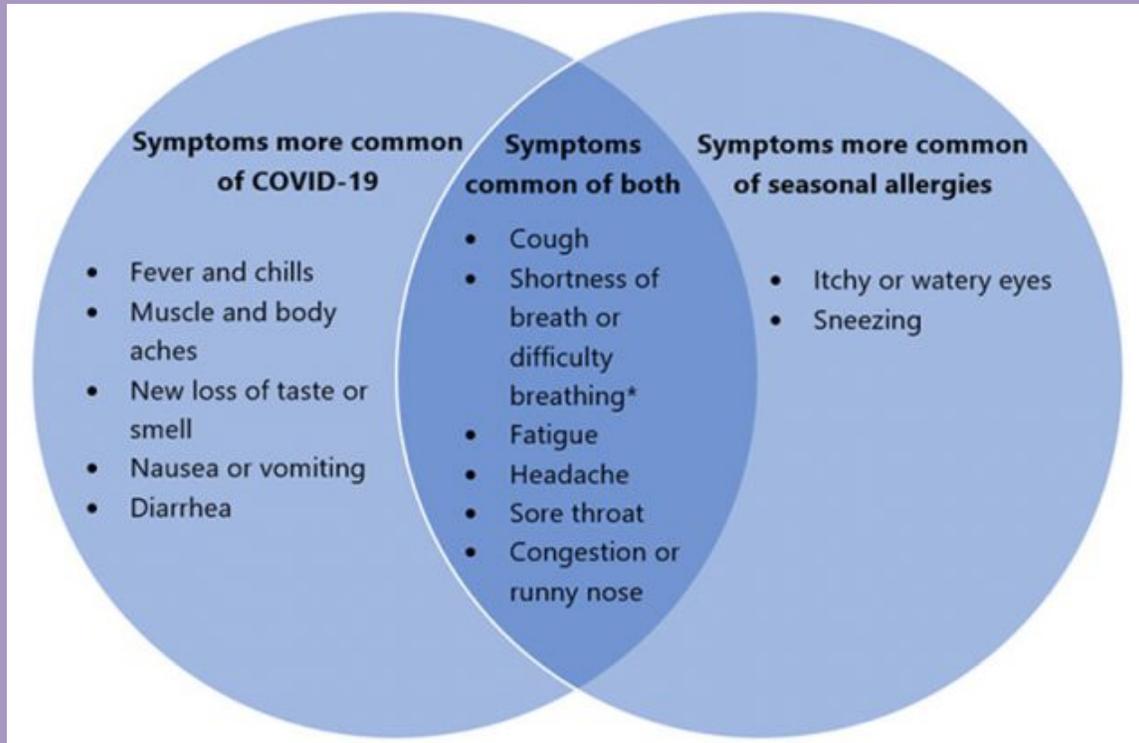
Protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites and mosquito-borne illness

- Use [EPA-Registered](#) Insect Repellent that contains one of the following active ingredients:
 - DEET
 - Picaridin (known as KBR 3023 and icaridin outside the US)
 - IR3535
 - Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) - not for children under 3 years
 - Para-methane-diol (PMD) - not for children under 3 years
 - 2-undecanone
- When used as directed, EPA-registered insect repellents are proven safe and effective, even for pregnant and breastfeeding women
- Reapply as directed. If wearing sunscreen and insect repellent, apply sunscreen first.
- We do not know the effectiveness of non-EPA registered insect repellents, including some natural repellents.
- Find the right insect repellent for you and your family using [EPA's search tool](#).
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants
 - For additional protect, use permethrin to treat clothing and gear
 - Permethrin is an insecticide that kills or repels mosquitos
 - Do not use permethrin directly on skin
- Take steps to control mosquitos indoors and outdoors
 - Use screens on windows and doors. Repair holes in screens to keep mosquitos outdoors
 - Avoid leaving standing water outdoors to prevent mosquitos from laying eggs in or near the water

COVID vs. Allergies

COVID-19 and seasonal allergies share many of the same symptoms. Our contract tracers have run into many people who tested positive after thinking they were only experiencing their usual allergy symptoms. If you are experiencing cough, congestion, runny nose, sore throat, or any of the shared symptoms below, it is strongly encouraged that you get tested.

Seasonal allergies are not typically accompanied by fevers/chills/body aches or by GI symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. If you experience these symptoms, please seek a COVID-19 test at the earliest convenience.



Fireworks: Protecting those who protect you!

While you are spending time with your family and friends celebrating Independence Day on the 4th July, remember this day is not all picnics, cook outs and fireworks for everyone. Some members of our community have real and significant reactions to the sudden and unexpected noise of fire works as well as the smell during and after a display.

Many veterans, first responders and refugees approach this time of year with growing anxiety as the unexpected nature of fire works can trigger those suffering Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and lead to stress, anxiety, flash backs (a sensory experience that makes an individual re live a past trauma like it is happening again), nightmares, and disorientation. The actual fire works are often not the problem, it is the feeling of not knowing or being able to prepare for them that causes an unwanted response.

If you live in a neighborhood and are planning a 4th of July fireworks display, please think about those that live around you. Consider placing a flyer in your neighbors mailboxes to alert them to the time and length of the display you

are planning – so that those who have suffered a negative effect can plan to either be awake and oriented, or leave for the duration.

It is not just those who have served who can struggle with fireworks – some dogs and cats suffer severe anxiety from them as well – so keeping your neighbors informed, can offer them the opportunity to be home and make their animals feel safe.

If you need help or resources to deal with PTSD, please consider some of the following resources:

<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/>

<https://onemindpsyberguide.org/apps/virtual-hope-box-review/>

<https://mobile.va.gov/app/ptsd-coach>

<https://www.militarywithptsd.org/fireworks-triggers-ptsd-and-veterans/>

Did You Know Your Local Health Department Does...?

...COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics!

The Farmington Valley Health District is proud to have administered more than 20,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines to our community since December 2020. Although our public clinics have stopped due to diminishing demand, we are still working hard to administer vaccines to homebound individuals and the hard to reach populations in our district.



If you know someone who may need a vaccine, have them call our office: 860.352.2333



Nurse Katie administers a Moderna vaccine to a member of the public.



Vaccine recipients sit for at least 15 minutes after receiving their vaccination. Medical professionals are on hand in the rare event that someone experiences adverse side effects.

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.

