



Health Matters

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Farmington Valley Health District
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Serving the towns of:
Avon
Barkhamsted
Canton
Colebrook
East Granby
Farmington
Granby
Hartland
New Hartford
Simsbury

Flu Vaccinations Work; Here's Why You Should Get One

In 1918 the world saw the arrival of one of the deadliest diseases of all time, the [flu of 1918](#). This was a horrifying epidemic that swept through countries all over the world. It's estimated that approximately 500 million people, or 1/5th of the world's population at the time, had become infected with this virus. The pandemic, also known as the Spanish Flu, claimed the lives of 50 million people worldwide and 675,000 people in the United States.

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In 2009 a new pandemic flu made its way into the headlines. This strain of the flu was named H1N1. Much like the Spanish Flu of 1918, H1N1 was unlike any other documented Flu virus. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated that the [fatalities](#) caused by this virus were upwards of half a million people globally. And surprisingly, about 80% of fatalities were observed in patients under the age of 65.

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Influenza pandemics occur when a novel or new virus strain is able to infect and spread among

people. They are unpredictable and do not happen often. However, seasonal influenza viruses are always circulating.

Today we know that seasonal influenza is the most common vaccine preventable cause of death in the United States. And yet in recent years only about **50%** of Farmington Valley residents have reported getting the flu vaccine. It is recommended that everyone age 6 months of age or older receive

a flu shot each fall. Specific guidelines can be found at the [CDC website](#).



Flu vaccines cause antibodies to form in the body approximately two weeks after the vaccination. These antibodies provide protection against infection from the viruses that are targeted in the vaccine. The CDC estimates that the seasonal flu shot can prevent at least half of all cases of the flu. If you could cut your chances of getting the flu in half, wouldn't you do so?

Here are some [additional reasons](#) to get your seasonal flu shot:

- Getting the flu shot will reduce your likelihood of getting sick and taking time off work. Flu.gov estimates a loss of nearly 7 billion dollars in productivity annually in the U.S.
- There may be needle-free vaccines available. If you are fearful of needles there is a nasal spray form of the vaccine. The availability of this form of vaccine isn't always guaranteed.
- If you are over the age of 65, you can qualify for a different version of the flu shot that provides you with even more protection.
- ***You won't get the flu from the flu shot.*** If you get sick after your flu shot was administered, it is likely you were already getting sick.
- Flu vaccine side effects are extremely mild with most people experiencing injection site tenderness. Life-threatening allergic reactions can occur but are very rare.
- The flu shot contributes to "**herd immunity**". The principal of herd immunity states that the more individuals who get the vaccine, the less people who will become infected. If less people are infected this protects those who can't get the flu vaccine because of medical contraindications.

Ask your local pharmacist or health care provider when you can get your seasonal flu shot.

The sooner the better!

To find a flu vaccine clinic in the Farmington Valley Click [here](#)
Click [here](#) to view more seasonal flu vaccine recommendations.

Click the video to the right to learn more about the importance and safety of vaccinations and the seasonal flu.



October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

After skin cancer, breast cancer is the second most diagnosed cancer in women in the USA. The incidence of breast cancer in Connecticut is the second highest in the US with only New Hampshire being higher. A woman's chances of getting breast cancer are about 12.4% but with early detection and treatment the 5-year survival rate for women is nearly 100%. Men can also get breast cancer with about 1 in 1,000 men affected.

Some of the most important protective factors against breast cancer include lifestyle choices and behaviors. Maintaining a physically active life, not smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, choosing to breast feed, having children before the age of 40, keeping alcohol consumption to a minimum and avoiding combined hormone replacement therapies can all reduce your risk factors of developing breast cancer. There are some factors that we can not change that may increase our risk factors for developing breast cancer. These include: early menstruation and late menopause, your age, race and genetic predisposition. While we cannot change these potential risk factors, being aware of these allows you to seek medical advice about screening procedures and the timing of those.

Breast Cancer in Young Women Can be Hereditary

Breast cancer is less common in younger women than in older women, but young women are more likely to have hereditary breast cancer. Hereditary cancers run in your family and are caused by an inherited change in your genes.



BRCA stands for the BRCA CAncer gene. You have two BRCA genes—one from your mother and one from your father—which help the body prevent breast cancer.

Everyone has BRCA Genes

Some people have mutations—or changes in their BRCA genes—which increase their risk for breast, ovarian, and other cancers.

1 IN EVERY 500
women in the US has either a BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation.



If one of your parents carries a BRCA gene mutation, you have a 50% chance of also having the mutation.



Screening for Breast Cancer:

Mammography: A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast tissue. Mammography is recommended every two years for women ages 50-74. If you are 75 or older, ask your doctor or nurse if you need to continue having mammograms.

Clinical Breast Exam: A clinical breast exam is a physical exam performed by your medical provider using their hands to palpate the breast and surrounding tissue to screen for irregularities or lumps.

Self-Breast Exam: Being aware of how your breasts look and feel is important to being able to identify any changes. Obvious changes in appearance, dimpling, irregularity, nipple discharge or change of color or appearance of the breast tissue should be reported to your medical provider for further examination.

***Remember** the most important thing you can do to identify breast cancer early is to know your body and have an open and honest conversation with your medical provider about your personal risk factors. Every person is different, and screening and treatment plans are based on an individual's medical history and risk factors.

For more information about breast cancer:

<https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/index.htm>

<https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Comprehensive-Cancer/Comprehensive-Cancer/The->



This year World Mental Health Day is October 10th. World Mental Health Day is an important opportunity to raise awareness for the millions of individuals who are living with mental health issues. Nearly 50 million people in the U.S. experienced mental illness in 2018 alone. In addition, 1 in 6 U.S. youth aged 6-17 years experience a mental health disorder each year.

Mental health issues can also have an impact on the family and loved ones of those who live with mental illness. As challenging as mental illness can be, there is always hope. The theme for this year's World Mental Health Day is suicide prevention. Every 40 seconds someone loses their life to suicide. That is why this year the World Health Organization challenges you to take 40 seconds. Take 40 seconds to start a conversation with someone who may be hurting. Take 40 seconds to share your thoughts if you are struggling.

It is important to share our thoughts, feelings, and concerns surrounding mental health issues so together we can reduce the stigma associated with mental illness and let people know they are not alone. Follow the hashtag [#40seconds](#) on [Twitter](#) to join the conversation and see what people are saying about suicide prevention. Click the link [here](#) to learn more about World Mental Health Day.

The Health District also encourages everyone to be trained in a suicide prevention program. It takes 90 minutes to learn the skills necessary to know how to identify the signs of someone who may be contemplating suicide and how to appropriately intervene. To learn more about QPR--Question, Persuade, Refer, call the health district.



All prescription drugs come with a list of potentially harmful side-effects and some prescription medications can be incredibly addictive. Individuals can easily become dependent on prescription drugs even if they are taking a medication under the close supervision of a medical professional.

Taking prescription drugs that aren't prescribed to you can increase the chances you will become dependent on a medication. Thousands of lives are lost each year to drug overdose. A great deal of drug overdoses involve medication that was taken from the house of someone the victim knew.

This year National Prescription Drug Take Back Day will be held on October 26, 2019. During National Take-Back Day, people are reminded to dispose of unwanted, unused, or expired drugs in a safe way. National Prescription Drug Take Back Day events provide an opportunity for Americans to prevent drug addiction and overdose deaths. If left unsecured certain drugs can be potentially deadly to your friends, family, and pets. Medication can be fatal with just one dose if used by someone to whom the medication was not prescribed.

- Locate a year-round collection site near you by clicking [here](#).
- Do you think you know the proper way to safely dispose of medications? Take the quiz [here](#) and find out!

- Visit the [FDA's "Flush List"](#) for a list of medications that can be disposed of by flushing down the toilet. Not all medication can be flushed down the toilet as some chemicals can make their way into our water and effect the ecosystem. **You should only flush medication down the toilet if the medication is on the Flush List and a Drug Take Back Box is not readily available.*



Click the link [here](#) to watch a powerful video produced by the Farmington Valley Health District that illustrates how easily medications can fall into the wrong hands.

Was Your Home Built Before 1978?

Homes build before 1978 may contain lead paint that could be dangerous to your children. Childhood lead poisoning is the most common pediatric public health issue and can lead to serious neurological damage. Children usually become exposed through ingesting paint chips or paint dust containing lead. The good news is lead poisoning is preventable.

Prevent Childhood Lead Poisoning

Exposure to lead can seriously harm a child's health.

- Damage to the brain and nervous system
- Slowed growth and development
- Learning and behavior problems
- Hearing and speech problems

This can cause:

- Lower IQ
- Decreased ability to pay attention
- Underperformance at school

The following are some simple steps to help protect your family from lead hazards:

- Always keep painted surface in good condition. If you notice any paint chipping, cracking, or peeling contact a professional for repair.
- Regularly clean floors, window sills, and other surfaces to reduce the amount of lead dust in any given room.
- Before you renovate any areas of your home make sure you have it tested for lead
- If you rent, inform your landlord of any chipping, or peeling paint. Don't assume your apartment is free of lead paint.
- Wash children's hands, pacifiers, and toys often.
- Speak with your pediatrician about testing your child's blood lead levels. All children in CT should be screened.
- Have your water tested for lead.

For more Information click [here](#).

Farmington Valley Health District Annual Report

Ever wonder what your health department is up to all year long? Visit the link below to view the Farmington Valley Health District Annual Report 2018-2019 on our home page:

<http://www.fvhd.org/>

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.

