



Health Matters

a monthly publication of the
Farmington Valley Health District
November 2021

Serving the towns of:

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

Safe Gathering During the Holidays



With the holidays around the corner, gatherings large and small are an inevitability. Here are just a few things you and your loved ones can do to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases this holiday season:

Connect with us on Facebook



Visit our website at www.fvhd.org

95 River Road
Canton, CT 06019
860-352-2333

- **Get Vaccinated** - anyone eligible to get the vaccine, including boosters when appropriate, is urged to do so. One is not considered fully protected by the vaccine until 2 weeks after the second dose of Pfizer or Moderna, or the first dose of J&J. Plan ahead!
- **Wear a mask** - Wear well-fitting masks over your nose and mouth when around others indoors, especially if you are not fully vaccinated.
 - Even those who are fully vaccinated should wear a mask in public indoor settings in communities with substantial to high transmission. Check the transmission rates where you are [here](#).
- **Avoid crowded, poorly ventilated spaces** - Gather outdoors or with a window open when possible
- **Isolate if you are sick** - do not attend or host gatherings you

if you having symptoms! If you seek testing, don't assume—wait for your results before gathering with others

- **Follow CDC Travel Guidance** - The CDC continues to recommend delaying travel until you are fully vaccinated.
 - If you must travel unvaccinated, be sure to review the CDC's guidance on [domestic](#) and [international](#) travel as it applies to you
 - For travelers too young to be vaccinated, see the CDC tips on [safer travel for families](#).

Latest COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Recommendations

For individuals who received an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna)

For individuals who received a Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, the following groups are eligible for a booster shot at 6 months or more after their initial series:

- 65 years and older
- Age 18+ who live in [long-term care settings](#)
- Age 18+ who have [underlying medical conditions](#)
- Age 18+ who [work or live in high-risk settings](#)

For individuals who received a J&J vaccine

For individuals who received a J&J vaccine, booster shots are recommended for those who are 18 and older and who were vaccinated two or more months ago. This means that all individuals who received a J&J vaccine should receive a booster.

Mixing & Matching (heterologous series)

Both the FDA and CDC support individuals to receive a booster dose that is a different vaccine type than they originally received for their primary series if they choose. CDC's recommendations now allow for this type of mix and match dosing for booster shots.

Those who are eligible can schedule a booster [here](#) or by calling 211.

Countdown to Turkey Chow-Down

The countdown to turkey chow down is on! The holiday season is a great time to remind friends and families about the importance of food safety and how to help prevent foodborne illness. Plan your menu in advance of the holiday. Make sure that you have enough space in your refrigerator to accommodate for separation of raw foods, such as raw turkey, from ready to eat or cooked foods. You must **never** thaw a frozen turkey out on the counter! Here are 3 proper methods to use instead:



Refrigeration

Keep turkey in its original, intact packaging and place in a leak proof container so raw juices don't drip into your refrigerator or on other foods. The turkey may be kept in refrigerator 1-2 days before cooking.

Defrosts Times by Turkey Weight

4-12 lbs.	1-3 days
12-16 lbs.	3-4 days
16-20 lbs.	4-5 days
20-24 lbs.	5-6 days

- **Microwave**

- Be sure to check the manufacturer's instructions for the size turkey that will fit into your oven, the minutes per pound, and the power level to use for thawing. The turkey must be cooked immediately after thawing.

- **Cold Water**

- Submerge the turkey in cold water and change the water every 30 minutes. Allow about 30 minutes defrosting time per pound. The turkey must be cooked immediately after thawing.

- **Preparing**

- Be sure to use separate utensils for raw meat and cooked, or ready to eat items. Practice frequent handwashing and sanitizing of all work surfaces and utensils that encounter the raw turkey.

Should I Wash the Turkey Before I Cook It?

You are more likely to spread bacteria by cross contamination throughout your kitchen and put you and your guests at risk.

How should I Cook the Turkey?

Place the thawed turkey with breast side up to cook. A whole turkey is considered cooked once you've achieved a minimum internal temperature of 165 °F throughout the bird. Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature in the innermost part of the thigh, wing and the thickest part of the breast. Don't rely solely on pop up thermometers pre-positioned in the bird.

Can I Cook Stuffing Inside the Turkey?

Generally, it is recommended that stuffing be cooked "out of the bird" to ensure that both the stuffing and the turkey are cooked thoroughly. Either way, both turkey and stuffing must reach a minimum temperature of 165°F. Always double check with a food thermometer!

What About Leftovers?

Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours. The quicker, the better! If you stuffed your turkey, remove the stuffing from the bird and refrigerate it separately in its own container. If you are packing leftovers or a plate for someone to bring home or if you are a guest at someone's home and bringing home a plate for yourself, keep leftovers in the refrigerator until you leave for home. If traveling a distance, you may want to consider using a cooler and ice packs to ensure that they stay cold until you are home and can refrigerate them.

How long can I keep my leftovers?

Leftovers are best when used within 1-4 days. Leftovers can also be frozen for up to one month. If freezing leftovers, label and date the

containers.

Additional Resources:

USDA meat and poultry hotline is 1-888-674-6854 or Butterball hotline is 1-800-288-8372

https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/poultry-preparation/lets-talk-turkey/CT_Index

Click the video below to learn more about holiday food safety!



Farmington Valley Foodshare

Food Insecurity is a problem.

There are many things to be grateful for this year. Vaccines may be allowing you to spent time with family members who you could only sit down to dinner with through a screen for the last holiday season. Improved treatments for and mitigation strategies mean fewer lives are put at risk, and survival from COVID-19 is improving.



West Hartford, Ct. - 10/23/2020 - Food delivered by FoodShare is distributed at Congregation Beth Israel. Photograph by Mark Mirko | mmirko@courant.com (Mark Mirko / Hartford Courant)

Employment rates are
back on the rise.

Photo [Source](#)

However, many families may still be struggling. Food insecurity was a major issue even before the pandemic, with an estimated [490,000](#) Connecticut residents struggling with hunger, of which more than 130,000 are children. Employment insecurity has only worsened food insecurity, among other problems, for the most vulnerable members of our community.

What is Foodshare?

[Foodshare](#) is the regional food bank serving Connecticut's Hartford and Tolland counties. It is a member of Feeding America, a national organization of more than 200 other food banks across the United States.

Mobile Foodshare is their "pantry-on-wheels", which brings fresh produce and other food to communities throughout the region. Please see below for their schedule for the remainder of the year. If you or a household you know is struggling to make difficult financial decisions, such as deciding between buying food and spending money on utilities, rent, or medical care, this may be a resource for you.

Schedule:

Avon

Location: Farmington Valley American Muslim Center (35 Harris Road)

Times: Every other Tuesday, 10:00-10:30am

Dates: Nov 9, Nov 23, Dec 7, Dec 21

Granby

Location: South Congregational Church (242 Salmon Brook St)

Times: Every other Tuesday, 1:30-2:00pm

Dates: Nov 2, Nov 16, Nov 30, Dec 3, Dec 17, Dec 31

Simsbury

Location: First Church of Christ (689 Hopmeadow St)

Times: Every other Monday, 1:00-1:30pm

Dates: Nov 1, Nov 15, Nov 29, Dec 13, Dec 27

Additional Resources

For this in a position to donate this holiday season, find ways you can help feed your community through Foodshare [here](#).

For more information on food insecurity in Connecticut, including an interactive map of food insecurity by town, see [here](#).

Diabetes Friendly Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving dinner can be stressful,



and all the more so when we cannot afford to let dietary restrictions take a holiday. Whether we are watching our blood sugar, avoiding allergens, or recovering from an eating or drinking disorder, there are a multitude of reasons modifications may need to be made to a large family meal.

November is Diabetes Awareness Month. Between travel, big meals, snacks in the office, parties, drinking, and reduced opportunity to schedule exercise, staying on track with blood sugar takes some additional effort this time of year. Here are [some tips](#) to keep your blood sugar regulated:

- **Don't skip meals in preparation for a large dinner** - Eating a small amount of carbs throughout the day is critical to maintaining even blood sugar and preventing unwanted highs and lows.
- **Keep starchy foods to a minimum** - Many tasty starches make their way to the Thanksgiving table, from mashed potatoes to dinner rolls to sweet potato pies. Either limit yourself to one starchy food, or take only a few spoonfuls or bites of each.
- **Choose grilled, steamed or raw vegetables and fruits** - Limit foods served in creams, gravies and butter
- **Don't eat what you don't enjoy** - If you taste something you don't enjoy, don't finish it! Save those calories for something you really love.
- **Drink calorie-free drinks** such as water, tea, coffee, or seltzer, rather than sugary beverages such as punch. Limit alcohol consumption to no more than 1 drink for women or 2 drinks for men.
- **Enjoy your treats** - the holidays are about indulging a little, so don't prohibit yourself from having small servings of the foods you love. Limit your portions, eat slowly, and savor the texture and taste of your favorite foods.
- **Take a walk with your family before or after your meal** - Exercise is a great way to lower blood sugar, keep everyone active, and even get you out of the house and away from further temptations.
- **Keep an eye on your blood sugar** - Check more often on the day of a large party to keep yourself on track and guide your choices
- **Don't beat yourself up if you overindulge** - As long as you are able to stay on track the rest of the year, one large meal will not have a detrimental effect of your health. Have a plan to get back on track quickly. If you monitor your sugars at home and take insulin, speak with your care team beforehand about how to handle highs and lows if they should happen.

Hosting?

Plan a menu that includes plenty of healthy options. Limit fried foods with added fat, and cover the table in plenty of vegetables.

Eat a snack before you start cooking to avoid sampling and grazing while you work. These calories add up!

Coming as a guest?

Offer to bring a healthy dish to share so you can be sure you'll have

Healthy, blood sugar conscious eating is not just for diabetics or prediabetics! Many of your favorite holiday dishes can be modified for a diabetic diet and still taste great. Check out some of our favorites at the links below:

From [Diabetic Living Magazine, via The Association of Diabetes Care and Education Specialists](#):

- Spinach-Roasted Red Pepper Dip
- Traditional Herbed Roast Turkey
- Crispy Potato Latkes
- Pumpkin Maple Pie
- Diabetic-Friendly Gingerbread Cookies

From [Diabetes Food Hub and the American Diabetes Association](#):

- Southern French-Style Herb-Roasted Turkey
- Roast Beef with Creamy Horseradish Sauce
- Healthy Homemade Green Bean Casserole
- Sage Stuffing
- Crustless Asparagus & Pepper Mini Quiche
- Baked Cauliflower Puree
- Lentil Stew
- Scalloped Potatoes
- Greek Yogurt Chocolate Mousse
- Almond Joy Hot Chocolate

Still missing your favorite? Search for it on the [American Heart Association](#)'s list of holiday recipe modifications!

Busting Flu Vaccine Myths!

Can a flu vaccine give me flu?

No. Flu vaccines given with a needle (i.e., flu shots) are made with either inactivated (killed) viruses, or with only a single protein from the flu virus. The nasal spray vaccine contains live viruses that are attenuated (weakened) so that they will not cause illness.



Can I get the flu vaccine and

Some people report having mild side effects after flu vaccination. The most common side effects from flu shots are soreness, redness, tenderness or swelling where the shot was given, as well as low-grade fever, headache and muscle aches. If these reactions occur, they usually begin soon after vaccination and last 1-2 days. These symptoms do not indicate that you have the flu unless they persist, and you will not test positive for the flu as a result of them.

Is it better to get sick with flu than to get a flu vaccine?

No. Flu can be a serious disease, particularly among young children, older adults, and people with chronic health conditions. Any flu infection can carry a risk of serious complications, hospitalization or death, even among otherwise healthy children and adults. In addition to making you less likely to get the flu, being vaccinated can also make your symptoms less severe than if you do contract the flu virus.

Is it too late to get vaccinated?

No. Vaccination can still be beneficial as long as flu viruses are circulating. Peak times for flu vary from December to March, but can be as late as May.

a COVID-19 vaccine at the same time?

Yes. The CDC has determined that it is safe to get both vaccines at the same visit.

Is it true that getting a flu vaccine can make you more susceptible to other respiratory viruses?

No, flu vaccines are not thought to make people more susceptible to other respiratory infections. There is also no evidence that getting a flu vaccination increases your risk of getting sick from a coronavirus, like the one that causes COVID-19.

A 2012 study that suggested that flu vaccination might make people more susceptible to other respiratory infections. After that study was published, many experts looked into this issue further and conducted additional studies to see if the findings could be replicated. No other studies have found this effect. It's not clear why this finding was detected in the one study, but the majority of evidence suggests that this is not a common or regular occurrence and that flu vaccination does not, in fact, make people more susceptible to other respiratory infections.

Do I really need a flu vaccine every year?

Yes. CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older with rare exception. Your immunity decreases over time, and since flu viruses are constantly changing, the vaccine is slightly different every year as well.



Mental Health Corner: Movember Foundation



Farmington Valley Health District has been the proud recipient of a 6-year Movember grant, which has allowed us to focus on building a robust men's mental health initiative called Resilience Grows Here (RGH). RGH serves as a public health approach to identifying mental health risk factors in our communities and providing opportunities for increasing mental health literacy, reducing stigma, and increasing access to mental health care, with a special focus on our veteran population.

As we celebrate veterans day this year, it is important that we reflect on why public health initiatives like RGH are so important to supporting the heroes that have served our country:

Why Veterans?

It is a local health department's responsibility is to identify populations at greatest risk. The Farmington Valley Health District realizes that mental health is a pervasive issue in our community. Mental health struggles are not only challenging on an emotional level, but increase risk of chronic disease, drug and alcohol problems, family violence, and job loss, which in turn can



impact health care access, housing, and nutrition. In particular, the stigma that surrounds mental health often leads to reluctance to seek help and a culture of silence surrounding the struggles that relate to it.

Veterans, Active Duty, and reserve servicemembers face an increased risk to their mental health due to the nature of their work, which can include exposure to the theater of war, repeated deployments, and time away from their home support systems. Although only an estimated [1%](#) of the population serves, their families and communities are impacted as well, dealing with the difficulties of moves across the country or loss of loved ones.

It is estimated that [22](#) US veterans take their lives every day, not including Active Service or National Guard. Of Veterans that take their lives, only 30% were ever engaged with the VA, meaning 70% never sought services for their struggle.

RGH Mission

RGH was built elevate the voices of veterans to advocate for what they need within their communities. The organization spent 1 year talking to veterans, active duty, reserves, and their families to find out what resources and programs they felt were lacking, insufficient, or broken. Very quickly, it became apparent that veterans do not trust the system. In their experience, too much has gone wrong, and they fear being let down.

The greatest barrier to accessing help with metal health, however, was stigma. Media portrayals, labeling, systematic training, cultural beliefs, and pride all served to create hesitance when it came to reaching out for help. Often, there was a feeling of moral injury as well, feeling like there was no one else who could understand the burden that was being carried and the hell these service members have seen.

RGH Aims

1. **Connect Veterans to Peers** - Peer training can be a key step in reducing stigma and getting people the help they need. RGH strives to educate veteran groups on how to begin providing peer support to their fellows.



2. **Improve Access to Services** - RGH works with existing community-based services to foster connections between veterans and their communities. Many great programs are already out there, but veterans may not always know about them, how to access them, or whether they qualify.
3. **Building Community and Family Supports** - Families are a vital link in veterans' wellbeing, and must be supported too.
4. **Promoting New Approaches to Dealing with Mental Health Challenges** - There is no miracle cure that works for everyone's struggles with mental health. RGH supports collaboration between clinical methods and more creative approaches so everyone can find a treatment solution that works for them.

Treatment vs Prevention

The Public Health approach is about prevention. RGH focuses on providing communities with the tools to fight mental health injury and to identify issues early mitigate future harms to the individual and community. Programs we run to achieve this include:

- **QPR Suicide Prevention Training & Mental Health First Aid Training** - two educational courses run throughout the year by the Farmington Valley Health District. Open to interested members of the community. Keep an eye on this newsletter for upcoming classes!
- **Peer Trainings** - Training all groups working with veterans from the VFW to local clubs, bars, and service providers to be better peer mentors and to help advocate for the needs of our veterans and their families.
- **Year of Resilience School Based Program** - FVHD won the NACCHO Emerging Best Practice award for this program in 2019. It is currently being taught in 3 of our school systems in the Farmington Valley bringing lessons in resilience and mental health awareness to our children.
- **Resiliency programs at 103rd National Guard** - RGH works with our National Guard members and student flight to better prepare them for the service they have chosen. This program helps to equip them with a mental health toolbox, and destigmatize mental health in the military environment

Please take the time to watch this important film about what we do:



Upcoming COVID Vaccine Clinics for Education Staff and Students 5 and up!

Farmington Valley Health District COVID-19 Vaccine School-Aged Clinics are Back!

FVHD will be hosting three sets of Pfizer COVID Vaccine clinics to immunize newly eligible students in the Farmington Valley aged 5 and up, as well as any education staff who have not yet been vaccinated. We are hosting 3 sets of clinics in November, with second doses in early December.

Contact your school administrator for more information on how to sign up. Communication will be coming out through your school once the vaccine is approved for this age group.

Volunteers can sign up now! We cannot make these clinics happen without our wonderful vaccinators and non-medical volunteers. A huge thanks to everyone who has signed up already. If you would like to help, please reach out to Anna at alarson@fvhd.org.

Got COVID-19 vaccine questions? See the [CDC FAQ](#).

Looking for a booster? FVHD is currently focusing on the unvaccinated. Boosters are available at most vaccine provider locations. Eligible recipients can schedule their boosters [here](#) or by calling 211.

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.

