The number of women and girls living with HIV is on the rise. Every 35 minutes, a woman tests positive for HIV in the United States. Today, about 1 in 4 Americans living with HIV are women.

"The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends routine HIV testing for all teens and adults ages 13-64, regardless of perceived risk. New York State requires an offer of such testing be made to everyone in this age range in a wide variety of health care settings," said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

“About 280,000 women in the United States are living with HIV/AIDS, with more of them living in New York than any other state. HIV is often incorrectly perceived as a disease only of gay men and men who inject drugs. The data in New York shows this isn’t the case,” (name of official) said.

At the end of 2009, there were more than 39,000 women in New York State reported living with HIV/AIDS.

“Women of color make up about 89 percent of current cases. Most women received their diagnosis of HIV between the ages of 30 and 49, and the most significant factor associated with transmission was heterosexual contact,” (name of official) said.

“Early diagnosis is the key to more successful treatment. The earlier an HIV infection is diagnosed, the better the prospects are for maintaining good health and for preventing further transmission,” (he/she) said.

Sexually active New Yorkers, including women, should be routinely screened and treated for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), since those with STDs are much more likely to acquire or transmit HIV.
Delays in seeking testing mean many people are diagnosed late in the course of their HIV disease. Some may have already developed full blown AIDS.

“About 30 percent of women in New York newly diagnosed with HIV/AIDS receive an AIDS diagnosis at the same time or within 12 months of their initial HIV diagnosis,” said (name of official).

A new law that took effect in New York State in September 2010 seeks to make HIV testing part of routine health care. Under the law, HIV testing must be offered to all persons 13 to 64 years old who receive hospital or primary care services anywhere in the state. All women should be tested for HIV, but especially those who have:

- had unprotected sex with multiple partners or with anyone whose HIV status is unknown;
- been diagnosed with or treated for hepatitis, tuberculosis, or an STD such as gonorrhea, Chlamydia, or syphilis;
- injected drugs or steroids or shared equipment (such as needles, syringes, and works); or
- exchanged sex for drugs or money.

To schedule a free fast HIV test, call the toll-free confidential New York State Department of Health AIDS hotline at 1-800-541-AIDS. Additional information about the anonymous HIV counseling and testing program is available at State Health Department Web site at http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/.
NEWS RELEASE
Teen Alcohol Abuse

Alcohol can be a dangerous drug for anyone, but especially for teenagers who lack the experience and maturity needed to avoid the worst pitfalls.

The consequences of teenage alcohol abuse can be severe and even fatal. They include alcohol poisoning, a decline in academic performance, risky sexual behavior, and death and injury due to drinking and driving.

“Nationally, about 5,000 people under the age of 21 die because of underage drinking every year. The great majority of these deaths are caused by motor vehicle injuries. Other causes of alcohol-related deaths include drowning, suicide, and homicide,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

Many teens start drinking around the age of 13, and most under the age of 21 have at times consumed more than five drinks on one occasion. After age 21, drinking habits generally tend to decline gradually.

Teens see adults drink at home and at social functions and are exposed to countless messages to drink. Familiarity with alcohol may make teens feel casual about its use, so they don’t fully appreciate the risks of binge drinking or drinking while driving.

“Binge drinking, defined as five or more drinks in a row, is a serious and all too common problem for young drinkers,” (name of official) said. “Binge drinking is considered by school officials to be one of the most serious problems on campus.

“As a parent you can play a critical role in your child’s decision-making regarding alcohol. Just be sure that the discussion does not become a lecture. There are several
topics that you can touch on during the conversation. They include your child’s views about alcohol consumption versus the realities. Find out what their knowledge of teen drinking is and why they think others their age drink,” (he/she) said.

“Let your children express themselves completely without interruption. This will make them feel respected and will promote a healthier dialogue,” (he/she) said.

This discussion would be a great opportunity for you to dispel common myths about alcohol use. For example, they may believe that beer contains less alcohol than wine and liquor. Twelve ounces of beer, five ounces of wine or one-and-a-half ounces of liquor each contain the same amount of alcohol and have the same effects on the body and brain.

New York State, like many others, has taken steps to reduce the number of motor vehicle fatalities due to alcohol. A Zero Tolerance law makes it illegal for a driver under age 21 to consume any alcohol. If their Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) is .02 to .07 percent, they will face a penalty of a six-month license suspension and up to $225 in fines.

To learn more about how to prevent teenage alcohol abuse, call the (local health agency name) at (telephone number).
NEWS RELEASE
Breastfeeding News

Choosing how you will feed your baby is one of the most important decisions new parents will make. Today, more and more mothers are choosing to breastfeed. It is a healthy choice for mothers and babies and frees families from the daily chore of preparing formula and warming bottles.

“While some women look forward to their chance to breastfeed, others may worry, especially if they do not have the support of their family and friends” (name of official) said. “These feelings of uncertainty are normal. Not only is breast milk best for your baby, breastfeeding can be an exciting and fulfilling part of motherhood. It can even make your life easier.”

Each year National Breastfeeding Week celebrates the many health benefits that breastfeeding provides, including:

- Breast milk helps keep babies healthy.
- Breast milk helps protect against colds, flu, diarrhea, ear infections and other illnesses.
- Breast milk is ready day or night, anytime your baby is hungry. It is always the right temperature.
- Breast milk is easy for your baby to digest, since your body makes it for your baby.
- Breast milk is naturally clean. It passes from the breast to the baby’s mouth and cannot “go bad” or “spoil.”
- Breast milk helps prevent diaper rash.
• Breastfed babies are less likely to be overweight later in life. They learn to stop eating when they are full, instead of when the bottle is empty.

“Given recent catastrophic weather emergencies such as Hurricane Katrina, it has become even more evident that breastfeeding is also a life-saving measure,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name). “Emergencies can happen anywhere and a breastfeeding mother’s milk is always fresh and available,” (he/she) said.

For more information about National Breastfeeding Week and the benefits of breastfeeding for babies and mothers, visit the New York State Department of Health website at http://www.health.ny.gov/community/pregnancy/breastfeeding.
Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is a serious health and safety concern during the warm weather months when many people use tools or boats with gasoline-powered engines.

“The danger is that small gasoline-operated engines and tools produce high concentrations of carbon monoxide, an odorless, invisible gas that can rapidly accumulate, even in areas that appear to be well-ventilated,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name). “Within minutes, carbon monoxide can build up to dangerous levels, causing unconsciousness. The result can be illness, including permanent, neurological damage, such as learning and memory impairments, or death.

“That’s why it’s critical to recognize the symptoms of CO poisoning and practice prevention. If you suspect you or someone else has CO poisoning, call 9-1-1 and get emergency assistance immediately,” (he/she) said.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide exposure, which can occur within minutes of exposure, include: headache, dizziness, nausea, weakness, a feeling of tightness in the chest, visual changes, slowed reaction time, altered driving skills, and confusion.

As exposure to carbon monoxide poisoning increases, individuals may become less capable of making decisions that could their lives.

When operating small, gasoline-powered engines, and tools using gasoline-powered compressors or generators, follow these safety precautions:

- Do not operate gasoline-powered engines or tools inside buildings or partially enclosed areas, such as porches or carports. Use of gasoline-powered tools indoors is extremely dangerous and can kill.

- Always place the pump and power unit of high-pressure washers outdoors, away from air intakes, and downwind of buildings so the engine exhaust is not drawn indoors. Run only the wash line indoors to where the work is being done.

- Keep all gasoline-powered generators and engines outdoors and away from windows, doors, and air intakes. Also, keep this equipment away from the
windows, doors and air intakes of neighbors. Don’t use generators, pressure washers, or other gasoline-powered tools anywhere indoors, including in a garage, carport, or basement.

• Consider the use of tools powered by electricity or electric air compressors if they are available and can be used safely. Be aware, however, that electrically powered tools can present an electrocution hazard and require specific safety precautions.

• Install a carbon monoxide detector in your home, but do not use it as a replacement for proper use and maintenance of your gas-powered tools and engines. With any carbon monoxide detector, look for Underwriters Laboratories (UL) certification. Follow manufacturers’ instructions for its placement, use and maintenance.

If you own or operate a boat, install a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector and test it daily. Carbon monoxide from engine exhaust builds up inside the boat and outside in areas near exhaust vents. Stay away and do not swim near these areas while engines or generators are running. Ventilate these areas before using them once the engines have stopped. Schedule regular engine and exhaust system maintenance inspections by trained technicians.

If you have symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning:

• Get fresh air immediately. Open doors and windows, and go outdoors. Turn off equipment if you can.

• Call 9-1-1 or another local emergency number for medical attention or assistance. Do NOT drive a motor vehicle. Get someone to drive you to an emergency room or health care facility. Tell the physician that you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning.

For more information on carbon monoxide poisoning and prevention, call the (local health agency name) at (telephone number) or visit the New York State Department of Health website at http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/emergency/weather/carbon_monoxide.
NEWS RELEASE
Preventing Childhood Falls

“Injuries from falls are a leading cause of hospitalization and emergency-room visits among children in New York State,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

Hospitals treat more than 100,000 fall-related injuries to children each year. These injuries account for more than $100 million in emergency department visits and $50 million in hospitalizations.

Falls most often occur at home, on the playground, and while playing sports.

“The good news is that parents, caregivers, and coaches can take steps to prevent childhood fall-related injuries. For children under the age of five, injuries most often occur right at home,” (name of official) said.

To reduce the risk of a fall-related injury in the home, parents and caregivers should:

• use approved safety gates on both the top and bottom of staircases;
• use window guards on all windows above the first floor, ones that prevent the window from opening more than four inches;
• keep stairways free from clutter;
• secure any area rugs;
• use slip-resistant mats and stickers in bathtubs and showers;
• never leave small children unattended on any elevated surface (such as a changing table or even a bed), or in the bathtub or shower; and
• use safety belts and straps in high chairs and car seats.

“For children from age five to nine, playgrounds are the most common location for falls,” (name of official) said.
To reduce the risk of children being injured at the playground, caregivers should take the following precautions:

- never leave children unattended;
- make sure the equipment being used is age-appropriate;
- check equipment for wear and have any hazards repaired;
- ensure that the area around and under playground equipment are covered or filled with soft materials.

Sports-related activities are a leading cause of falls for tweens and teenagers – those from 10 to 19. Parents and coaches should:

- always supervise children playing sports and engaging in other recreational activities;
- make sure that children wear the appropriate protective gear;
- make sure that children have a yearly check-up;
- check the playing fields for hazards such as broken glass, trash, or uneven surfaces; and
- make sure that children prepare for physical activity by warming up first.

“Childhood falls are a common source of injury, but recognizing the risks to children and taking steps to reduce the risk of falls and the severity of their consequences are things we can do to protect our children,” (name of official) said.

To learn more about preventing childhood falls, call the Growing Up Healthy Hotline at 1-800-522-5006 (residents of New York City should call 1-800-577-2229), or visit the New York State Department of Health website at

Winning isn’t everything. In fact, competition in sports is a distant second to the healthful benefits of physical activity and good nutrition. To reduce the epidemic of childhood obesity, communities and families should encourage an environment that promotes healthy physical activities and nutrition.

“Children today are less physically active than they were a generation ago and the result can be seen in their level of fitness and overall health,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name). “The prevalence of obesity among children and teenagers in the U.S. has tripled in the past 30 years among children, aged 6 to 19 years, and doubled among preschool children, aged 2 to 5 years.”

Compared with active children, inactive children weigh more, have higher blood pressure, and lower levels of heart-protective high-density lipoproteins. Unhealthy food choices, including large portions of high calorie fast foods and sugar-sweetened beverages, have become a way of life for many children.

“Today’s overweight children risk growing up to be overweight adults with serious health problems, including diabetes, heart disease, some forms of cancer and joint problems,” (name of official) said. “Even more dangerous, these diseases, which were once thought of as adult problems, are also being seen in childhood.”

Earlier this year First Lady Michelle Paige Paterson announced a “Healthy Steps to Albany: First Lady’s Challenge” for children in schools across New York State. The health and wellness initiative challenged students to increase their physical activity, be
more aware of the nutritional value of what they eat and come up with their own ways to make healthier life choices.

According to the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans released in 2008, children and adolescents should engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day to ensure good health. Playing noncompetitive sports is a great way for kids to have fun while being physically active. Jumping rope, playing kick-ball, tossing a disc, tag, and hide-and-seek are just a few of the ways to gain the benefits of physical activity.

Parents can help children be more active by being good role models. Gather the entire family and go for a bike ride or a quick walk around the neighborhood.

Limit children’s television viewing and other recreational screen time to two hours or less per day. Some easy first steps are to take the TV out of children’s bedrooms and turn off the TV when no one is watching.

Children should also be encouraged to eat more vegetables and fruits everyday and choose low-fat or fat-free milk or 100 percent juice instead of sugar-sweetened beverages. Crispy vegetables, tasty fruits and low-fat or fat-free yogurt can make healthful and delicious snack alternatives to candy and chips.

Parents and teachers should discourage their consumption of sweetened soft drinks. A person who drinks one can of sugar sweetened soda each day over the period of a year will consume 25 pounds of sugar or 49,640 extra calories, which is roughly the equivalent of 14 pounds of weight gain.

To learn more about fitness and children, visit New York State Department of Health obesity prevention web site at http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/obesity.
NEWS RELEASE
When in Doubt, Take Them Out!

Every year, about 4,000 New York children age 19 and younger are treated at hospitals for sports-related traumatic brain injuries. Many more concussions are treated by a school nurse or primary care physician.

“An athlete doesn’t need to be knocked unconscious in order to suffer a concussion. A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a bump or blow to the head, or a blow to the body that causes the head to move rapidly back and forth,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

Concussions can happen during practice or in a game. They happen to athletes of all ages in any sport, but most often occur in contact sports, such as football, rugby, or ice hockey. Recognizing and responding to a concussion when it first occurs can help prevent further injury and even death. If it is suspected that your child has suffered a concussion, he or she must be removed from the practice of game immediately.

“If your child complains about a headache or pressure in the head, is nauseous or vomiting, experiences dizziness or balance problems, has double or blurred vision, feels sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy; has loss of concentration or memory, and is more sensitive to light or noise, he or she should be taken to a doctor or health care professional to be examined for a concussion,” said (name of official) .

After taking a fall or being hit, if your child appears dazed or stunned; has a delayed response to questions; loses the ability to remember what happened before or after the hit or fall; is confused about their game assignment, position, score or opponent; behaves differently; or,
their mood or personality changes, they may have suffered a concussion and they should be examined immediately by a health care provider.

Concussions are serious and can take time to heal. A doctor or health care professional can tell if your child has had a concussion and when they may return to play.

Under state, an athlete suspected of having a concussion must be taken out of play immediately. The athlete cannot return to play for at least 24 hours and until they have received written clearance by a licensed physician.

Should an athlete return to practice or a game before the brain has had time to heal, there is a greater risk of suffering a second concussion. Repetitive concussions can be very serious and potentially cause permanent brain damage.

To help prevent concussions, make sure that your child wears the correct protective equipment (helmets, padding, shin guards, and eye and mouth guards) for the sport they are playing. Protective equipment must fit properly, be in good condition, and be worn during practice and games. Ensure your child follows their coach’s rules for safety and the rules of the sport. And don’t forget to teach children about practicing good sportsmanship.

NEWS RELEASE
Drive Defensively During Disasters

Wearing your seatbelt and driving defensively are always essential on the road. But during a disaster, that may not be enough. Stay informed and plan ahead to protect yourself and others when driving in a disaster, especially in extreme weather conditions. Disasters can happen with little warning and being prepared can help ensure safe travel.

Keep up-to-date maps in your vehicle with evacuation routes and nearby shelters listed in case of an emergency.

“Tune your radio into your local news station for updates. Consider signing up for the NYAlert at [www.nyalert.gov](http://www.nyalert.gov) for free weather and traffic updates. The alerts can be texted to your phone or sent as a phone message or email,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

Be aware of disasters that are common in your area as well as your destination. Learn when it may be necessary to abandon your vehicle and seek better protection. The following safety tips will help you know what to do if disaster strikes while driving.

**Earthquakes:** *Stay IN the car* and park out of the way of danger. Stay far away from trees, overpasses, telephone posts, and other objects that can collapse on your car. Remain in your vehicle for the duration of the earthquake.

**Extreme Heat:** *Stay OUT of the car.* The temperature will rise quickly inside your vehicle and children especially can die from heat stroke in a matter of minutes. Never leave children, senior citizens or pets in a car on a hot day even if the windows are rolled down.
**Floods:** Get OUT of the car and walk to higher ground. As little as six inches of water can reach the bottom of your car and cause it to stall. As little as two feet of moving water can carry away your vehicle.

**Hurricane:** Get OUT of the car quickly. Flooding can begin long before the hurricane arrives. Water can be deeper than it appears and will rise quickly.

**Landslides:** Stay IN the car and drive out of the landslide’s path immediately. Be on the alert for cracked pavement, fallen rocks, etc.

**Tornadoes:** Get OUT of the car. Take your map with you and head to the nearest shelter, gully or ditch by foot (avoid trees and other vehicles).

**Wildfires:** Stay IN the car and drive very slowly with headlights on, windows and vents closed. In heavy smoke, do not continue to drive. Park away from trees and brush, leave your headlights on but the ignition off. Stay on the floor of your car covered with a blanket until the main fire passes.

Always keep a well stocked emergency kit in your car. Stock it with: jumper cables, maps, emergency flares, first aid supplies, flashlight, blankets, spare tire, battery-operated radio, cell phone charger, bottled water, and non-perishable foods. If a disaster is expected in your area, have a full tank of gas and cash on hand in case of evacuation.

“When authorities declare it’s safe to drive, be aware of downed power lines, cracked pavement, or stop lights that are not working. Always listen to the radio when driving for the latest bulletins from the National Weather Service,” (name of official) said.

Tips for Healthier Eating Out

Eating at fast food restaurants can be fun and convenient, but too often it means choosing foods that are not necessarily healthy. It’s tempting to choose high calorie, high fat meals that you would avoid if you were eating at home.

“Poor nutritional choices, especially when combined with lack of physical activity, are fueling an obesity epidemic. The percentage of New York State adults who are overweight or obese increased from 42 percent in 1997 to 60 percent in 2008. Obesity among children and adolescents has tripled over the past three decades. Today, a third of New York’s children are obese or overweight,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

Overweight and obesity put us at increased risk for life-threatening conditions including heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and some forms of cancer.

Because people are eating out more often, it can be a big contributor to the problem of poor nutrition. Knowing what to look for on the menu can help people make healthier choices.

“The average adult needs about 2,000 calories a day. A single meal of a double hamburger, large fries and soda can be more than half of the calories needed all day,” (name of official) said.

Until recently, it's been challenging to figure out how many calories those meals actually have. In some parts of New York State, fast food and chain restaurants are now required to list the calories for each item on menu boards and on printed menus. Other restaurants are voluntarily providing this information to their customers.
The New York State Department of Health’s iChoose600 campaign on Facebook at www.Facebook.com/iChoose600 offers plenty of help in making healthier fast food choices. The iChoose600 Calorie Counter app helps users calculate meals under 600 calories at fast food chains. Users are also able to save their meal choices in their profile, share with Facebook friends and publish meals on their wall.

Keep in mind that even meals under 600 calories at fast food restaurants are not necessarily healthy. They are better choices than higher calorie options, but they are generally still high in sodium (salt) and low in whole grains and healthy fruits and vegetables. French fries have so much fat that they don't really count as a healthy vegetable choice. The best way to stay healthy is to eat less fast food, have more healthy meals at home and get some physical activity every day.

There are small, easy steps to reduce calories at fast food restaurants, like ordering water instead of soda and ordering small instead of large fries. The (local health agency name) offers these tips to cut calories:

- Cut the combo meal – it can mean hundreds of extra calories that you don’t need.
- Go back to basics – order water.
- Go “small” or skip the sugary drinks like soda, sweetened teas and juice drinks.
- Don’t double up – order a single burger
- Limit, or even better, pass on the mayonnaise, cheeses and sauces.
- Skip the bacon and sausage. They’re just extra calories and fat.
- Go for grilled, not fried
- Share half with a friend or family member.

To learn more about obesity and healthy nutrition, visit State Health Department web sites at www.health.ny.gov/prevention/obesity/ichoose600 or www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition.
NEWS RELEASE
September is Healthy Aging Month

September is Healthy Aging Month, when we are reminded that people who are physically active, make healthy food choices, avoid tobacco and alcohol, and who get regular check-ups are more likely to enjoy many years of staying active and independent.

There are 35 million people 65 years old and older in the United States. In 2000, the average life expectancy at birth was 76.9 years and by 2030 it is estimated that the “oldest-old,” age 85 and older, could grow to 10 million people.

The (local health agency name) recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity each week to help maintain healthy heart and lungs, maintain muscle strength and tone, and control weight.

“The most popular form of recreation among people 65 and over, by far, is walking. Swimming and exercising with equipment are popular as well. Other easy ways to stay active include gardening, dancing, yoga, stretching, or riding a bicycle – even a stationary bicycle,” (name and title of official) said.

“Vegetables and fruit provide vitamins, minerals and nutritional fiber and help reduce fat and cholesterol. Whatever your age, you should eat at least four to five cups of vegetables and fruit every day to reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer, and to help maintain a healthy weight,” (he/she) said.

Low-fat and fat-free dairy products are great sources of calcium, which helps maintain strong bones. Talk to your health care provider about how much calcium is right for you, and whether you should take a calcium supplement in addition to eating calcium-rich foods.
Positive mood (being loving, generous, kind, compassionate), having good relationships, working at something that makes us feel worthwhile, balancing play and work, and minimizing stress are sure to lead to healthy aging. Get involved in a cause you believe in or something that interests you. Your community needs you!

Should you feel stressed or depressed, seek help. Make sure to have fun and do things that make you feel useful.

If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation. Have no more than two drinks in one day if you're a man or one drink each day if you're a woman.

For more information on living a healthier life, call the (local health agency name) at (telephone number).
NEWS RELEASE
Preventing Heat-Related Illness

The sun is shining, the temperature has risen and you can’t wait to get outdoors. The last thing you are probably thinking about is a heat-related illness, which can cause serious injury and even death if not treated, warns (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

Anyone at any time, even those who are physically fit, can suffer heat-related illness. Some people, such as infants, young children and those over 65 years of age, are at even greater risk than others. Also, people with chronic respiratory illnesses, such as asthma or diabetes, may find that their conditions get worse during the summer months.

Heat or sun stroke is the most dangerous type of heat-related illness and causes several hundred deaths in the United States each year. Heat stroke occurs when a person’s body temperature goes over 105 degrees Fahrenheit. If you think someone has heat stroke, call 911, (name of official) said.

A person may not have heat or sun stroke, but can experience heat exhaustion and heat cramps. Heat exhaustion symptoms include cold, pale, clammy skin, fainting and vomiting. Move the person to an area out of the direct sunlight and put a washcloth or towel with cool water on the back of their neck or forehead. Give them water every 15 minutes for one hour.

Heat cramps are painful spasms in the legs and abdomen. To relieve heat cramps, apply pressure on the cramping muscles or gently massage them, advises (name of official). As in the case of heat exhaustion, give the person sips of water every 15 minutes for one hour.

To ensure a safe summer, take these steps to stay cool in hot weather:

- Drink plenty of fluid. Don’t wait until you are thirsty to drink. Water is best because it replenishes your body’s natural fluids. Avoid alcohol and caffeine, which dehydrate the body.
• Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. Light colors will reflect away some of the sun's energy. Wear a wide-brimmed hat or use an umbrella. Use a sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher.

• Eat small meals and eat more often. Do not eat a lot of food high in protein, which increases your body heat.

• Engage in physical activity during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m. Try not to go outside during the hottest part of the day - between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

• Stay indoors in a cool or air-conditioned place.

• Never leave a person or pet in a parked vehicle, even if you expect it to be a short period of time.

For more information on heat-related illness, visit the New York State Department of Health at http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/1243.
New Release
Heatstroke and Kids in Cars

Children should never be left alone in vehicles which can heat up to deadly temperatures in minutes and quickly kill a child. Last year, 30 children in the US died from heatstroke in hot cars - including a baby in New York State. These deaths are even more tragic because they are preventable.

(Name and title) of the (local health agency name) said, “Kids and hot cars are a deadly combination. In just 10 minutes, a car’s temperature can rise by 10 degrees, and continues to climb and stay hot. That means on a 90-degree day, the temperature inside a car can quickly surpass 107 degrees – which is the internal body temperature at which children die from heatstroke.

Adding to this dangerous situation is that children get overheated up to five times more quickly than adults,” (he/she) said. “More than half of the heatstroke deaths in cars are children less than two years old. In fact, not counting crashes, heatstroke is the leading cause of motor vehicle deaths for children 14 and younger.”

(Official) urges everyone to follow simple preventive tips to reduce the number of children who die in hot cars because they are accidentally forgotten by parents and caregivers (53%); who get into cars to play and then become trapped inside (29%) and who are left in the car by an adult who was running errands, visiting or attending to other business and could not or did not want to take the child with them (18%).

- **Use reminders.** Keep a toy or large, stuffed animal in your child’s car seat. When you buckle in your child, move the animal/toy to the front seat. It will remind you that a child is in the car seat. Put your briefcase, cell phone or diaper bag in the backseat so you need to open the back door to get it and see that your child is waiting for you. Ask your child-care provider to call you if your child doesn’t show up as expected, especially if there is a change of routine. Set the alarm on your phone as a reminder for drop off and pick up times. This is important if your routine changes, or you are tired or overwhelmed. Put a “sticky” note where you will see it -- on your dash or another spot. Remind yourself where your children are and when to pick up or drop them off.
• **Look before you lock.** Always check the backseat and trunk or cargo area. Keep your keys and remote-access devices out of a child’s reach. Don’t let kids play with them. Teach kids to never play in or around cars. They can become trapped inside and die from heatstroke.

• **Never leave a child alone in a car.** There is no safe amount of time or any reason to leave a child behind. Cars heat up fast and stay hot. Even on a cooler or cloudy day, a child is at risk for heatstroke. Rolling down windows or parking in the shade will not safely cool down the car. A car can still reach deadly temperatures when it’s only in the 60s. Always take kids with you. Use a “drive-thru” so you don’t need to leave the car. And pay for gas at the pump.

If you see a child in a hot car, call 9-1-1 right away and follow instructions. Emergency personnel are trained to respond.

Do you have plans to renovate your home this summer? If you have an older home, the (local health agency name) has some tips for your safety. Lead exposure can cause serious problems, especially for children under six years old. Lead-based paint was used in millions of homes until it was banned in 1978. If your home was built before then, here are some facts you should know:

- Lead can affect a child’s brain and developing nervous system causing reduced IQ and learning disability. Children under 6 are most at risk.
- Lead exposure can cause behavioral problems.
- Lead in dust is the most common way people are exposed to lead. Lead dust is often invisible. You can get lead in your body by breathing or swallowing lead dust or by eating soil or paint chips containing lead.
- Even children who seem healthy can have high levels of lead in their bodies.

“These same facts apply to childcare facilities or any building built before 1978,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

“If renovation is taking place in your day care center or your home, the work areas should not be accessible while the work is being done. You may even want to move out of your home temporarily while all or part of the work is done. And child care facilities and schools may want to consider alternative accommodations for children,” (he/she) said.

Federal law requires contractors who are hired for renovations, repair and painting in homes, child care centers and schools built before 1978 that disturb painted surfaces to be certified and follow specific practices to prevent lead contamination. Landlords who do renovations, repairs and painting must also be certified. Lead-based paint may be
hazardous on surfaces that children can chew on such as window sills, doors and door frames, stairs, railings, banisters, porches and fences. Lead can also be found in drinking water in homes that have plumbing with lead or lead solder.

If you suspect that your house has lead hazards, here are some important things you can do to protect your family:

- If you rent, call the landlord immediately to report peeling or chipping paint.
- Clean up paint chips right away and clean all other surfaces with general all-purpose cleaner.
- Wash children’s hands often keep them away from chipping paint, and prevent destructive behaviors like chewing on painted surfaces.
- Always hire certified contractors for work that will disrupt paint in housing or child occupied facilities built before 1978 or get properly trained and certified yourself. You can search for a certified firm at [http://cfpub.epa.gov/flpp/searchrrp_firm.htm](http://cfpub.epa.gov/flpp/searchrrp_firm.htm).

Remember, lead can also be dangerous for adults. Lead exposure can cause reproductive problems for men and women, high blood pressure and hypertension, nerve disorders, memory and concentration problems and muscle and joint pain.

For more information about renovating right and about the dangers of lead exposure to children and adults, call the (local health agency name) at (telephone number).

For more information about the Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule (RRP) visit the Environmental Protection Agency Web site at [www.epa.gov/lead/pubs/renovation.htm](http://www.epa.gov/lead/pubs/renovation.htm) or call the National Lead Information Center at 1-800-424-LEAD.
Now that warm weather is here, we have the opportunity to start working on the home improvement projects we’ve been thinking about over the winter.

You’ve put a lot of thought into the work you’re going to do: choosing paint colors, picking out new fixtures, perhaps even designing an addition. But have you thought about how to protect yourself and your family from lead exposure while the work is being done?

“If your home was built before 1978, you must consider that the paint in your home could contain lead, and you’ll have to plan any home renovation, repair, and painting activities with this in mind,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

Lead dust, fumes and paint chips can cause serious health problems. Too much lead in the human body can cause serious damage to the brain, nervous system and red blood cells. Young children between the ages of six months and six years are more likely to suffer health problems from lead exposure. Lead poisoning can slow a child’s physical growth and mental development and can cause behavior problems, mental retardation, kidney and liver damage, blindness and even death.

“A study by the New York State Department of Health found that in 2006-2007 home renovation, repair, and painting activities were the most likely source of lead exposure in 14.3 percent of children with elevated blood lead levels,” (name of official) said.
Keeping lead dust, fumes, and paint chips to a minimum while you’re working is simple and inexpensive - and important. When it comes to lead, remember to follow these three simple rules: WORK WET, WORK CLEAN and WORK SMART.

The (local health agency name) recommends the following steps to reduce lead exposure when doing renovations, repairs, and painting:

- Prepare the work area. Use plastic sheeting to cover floors, furniture, and other items that may collect lead dust. Sheeting isn't expensive, and should be disposed of after the job.

- Use methods that won't create a lot of dust or fumes. For example, use a spray bottle filled with water to soak any surface before you scrape, sand, or otherwise disturb lead-based paint - this helps to keep the lead dust down.

- When cleaning up, use a wet mop with a detachable head. Throw out the mop head after you're done cleaning. Shop vacuums are not good for cleanup since they end up spreading lead dust around.

For more information about how to do lead-safe home renovation, repair, and painting, visit the State Health Department’s lead safety web site at http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/renovation_repair_painting.
NEWS RELEASE
Lyme Disease

Summer is finally here! The sun is warm, the trees and flowers are in bloom, the days are longer, and it’s the season to put on a short sleeved shirt, slip into your walking shoes and enjoy the outdoors. Take advantage of the warm weather as much as you can, but remember that the risk of Lyme disease is present throughout New York State.

The (local health agency name) reminds everyone to think about protecting yourself and your family while enjoying outdoor activities. Lyme disease is caused by the bite of an infected deer tick, also known as the blacklegged tick. Over 55,000 cases of Lyme disease have been reported across New York State since 2001.

“While ticks are present year-round, they are most active from April through September. In tick-prone areas, any contact with vegetation, even playing in the yard, can result in exposure to ticks,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

Lyme disease can have serious complications if it is not identified and treated early. The most noticeable early sign of Lyme disease is a characteristic rash resembling a bull’s-eye or a solid red patch, which usually, but not always, develops between 3 and 30 days after the tick bite. The rash often expands over time and can last for several weeks. In some cases, no rash appears, while in other cases, there are multiple rashes. The rash usually feels warm to the touch, but is rarely itchy or painful.

Other symptoms of early Lyme disease include fever, fatigue, chills, headache, stiff neck, muscle aches and joint paint. If you notice these signs or symptoms, consult a health care provider immediately. Patients treated with antibiotics in the early stage of the infection usually
recover rapidly and completely. Insect repellents can greatly reduce your risk of Lyme disease. Follow label directions carefully and do not allow children to apply insect repellents themselves.

“One of the most effective ways to avoid Lyme disease is to check your body for ticks at the end of every day. Ticks can attach to any part of your body, but, pay particular attention to the back of knees, thighs, groin, behind ears, the scalp area, armpits and your back when checking for ticks,” (name of official) said.

It is important that a tick be removed as soon as it is discovered. If the tick is removed within 36 hours, the risk of Lyme disease is greatly reduced.

If you find a tick attached to your body, remove it by taking the following steps:

- Using tweezers, grasp the tick near the mouthparts, as close to the skin as possible.
- Be careful not to squeeze, crush or puncture the body of the tick, which may contain infectious fluids.
- Pull the tick in a steady, upward motion away from the skin. You may be surprised at the resistance you feel when pulling out a tick. Ticks attach firmly to the body when they bite.
- Do not attempt to remove ticks by using petroleum jelly, kerosene, lit cigarettes or other home remedies. They may increase the chance of contracting a tick-borne disease.
- After removing the tick, thoroughly disinfect the bite site with soap, rubbing alcohol or hydrogen peroxide. Wash your hands carefully.

“Contact your health care provider if you have any concerns about incomplete tick removal. Record the date and location of the tick bite. If a rash appears or you experience flu-like symptoms, contact your health care provider immediately,” (name of official) said.

To learn more about Lyme disease, visit the New York State Department of Health Web site at http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/lyme.
NEWS RELEASE
June is Men’s Health Month

June is Men’s Health Month. And the week before Father’s Day is celebrated as Men’s Health Week. This year, men’s Health Week is June 11 to 17.

The (county health agency name) wants you to have the facts about men’s health. (Name and title) of the (county health agency name) says: “Many men continue to ignore their own health. Poor health education and poor health behaviors in the lives of men continue to contribute to a growing crisis in men’s health.”

“All too often, men will put their own health last in their priorities. But many causes of illness and even death are easily preventable. It’s a fact that simple awareness of preventable health problems – and the early detection and treatment of disease – among men can make a profound difference in the quality of life. Early detection in the form of routine lab tests, exams and screenings can translate into better preventive care and outcomes for many common health concerns such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer, (he/she) said.

“Unfortunately, many men resist getting routine medical check-ups,” (name of official) said. “From childhood on, many men are taught to minimize their health concerns. When a small boy skins his knee, he might be told ‘big boys don’t cry.’ Later in life, when a man in his fifties has chest pains, he may be inclined to minimize it as ‘just indigestion,’ because he’s been taught his entire life to ignore or minimize the physical symptoms of his body. These attitudes need to change: because early detection and treatment – along with living a healthy lifestyle - are the best tools we have to prevent health problems from becoming more serious.
Women are significantly more likely than men to see a physician regularly; and men are more likely to be entirely disconnected from the health-care system, and to put off getting attention for their symptoms until a problem is too severe to ignore.

“Men,” (health official) says, “are sometime apprehensive about going to the doctor. Men are often reluctant to admit to anyone that there might be anything wrong.”

This reluctance is a contributing factor in the growing health disparities between men and women. The difference in life expectancies between the sexes is now over five years. Men have higher rates of heart disease and cancer, and higher rates of chronic health problems such as high blood pressure and dangerously high cholesterol levels – problems which often can be prevented and that are often treatable or manageable IF they are detected. Men should find a health-care provider, and get in the habit of seeing them regularly to assess their own personal risks for various health problems.

“For more information on men’s health, call the (county health agency name) at (telephone number), or visit the “Men’s Health Month” website at www.menshealthmonth.org .”
NEWS RELEASE
Mental Health Following an Emergency Event

Living through the devastation of an emergency can have a long lasting effect on your mental health. Understanding the emotional impact is your first step toward coping and bouncing back from a traumatic experience.

“You may feel anxious about you and your family’s safety, and this is normal,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

Most people have a variety of reactions. They might have difficulty resuming their daily schedules and dealing with their emotions. They may need mental health services but may not seek them.

Historically, the emergency preparedness focus has been on injury, infection and exposure-related illness. After 9-11, however, state, local and community-based mental health organizations became a source offering psychological first aid. They provide reassurance that emotional distress after an emergency event is normal and suggest coping skills to help you return to your normal routines.

“By raising awareness of mental health before, during and after an emergency, we can help people get professional treatment in a timely manner, and help them begin the healing process,” (name of official) said.

It’s important to know that people react in different ways to an emergency. “For many people, it is easier to focus a lot of energy on helping other people or maintaining their daily schedules and routines,” (he/she) said.

While it may feel better to pretend the event did not happen, in the long run, it is better to be honest about your feelings and acknowledge the sense of loss and uncertainty.
“It’s important to take care of yourself and to monitor your own emotions during difficult times. Tending to your own mental health and emotional well-being will make you a better, more reliable resource for friends and family members during their times of need,” (name of official) said.

Recovery from an emergency or traumatic event takes time and requires rebuilding on many levels: physically, emotionally and spiritually. (Name of official) suggests the following steps to ease stress:

- Talk with someone about your feelings.
- Maintain a daily routine.
- Stay active.
- Participate in memorials or rituals.
- Become involved in support programs.

If you are having trouble dealing with your emotions or would like to talk with a counselor, don’t be afraid to ask for help. (Name of official) encourages people to consult a counselor or mental health professional. For more information, call the (local health agency name) at (telephone number) or visit: www.omh.ny.gov.
One of the best gifts we can give to children is to instill in them while young the habit of making healthy nutritional choices.

“Too often children get the wrong message about nutrition. In part, this is due to heavy commercial promotion of sugary beverages and calorie laden fast foods. The result is an epidemic of obesity that threatens the health of children and adults,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

Today 60 percent of adults and one-third of children in New York State are overweight or obese. New York spends nearly $8 billion a year on health care for obesity-related illnesses, of which about 80 percent is paid by taxpayers through Medicare and Medicaid.

“Overweight children risk growing up to be adults with health problems, including diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, some forms of cancer and joint problems. Even more dangerous, these diseases, which were once thought of as adult problems are also being seen in childhood,” (name of official) said.

Causes of childhood obesity are mainly eating too many calories and getting too little physical activity or, simply put, more calories eaten than burned. To help maintain a healthy weight, in addition to paying attention to food, children need to be physically active. The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend that children get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day.
Sugar-laden foods are a significant source of excess calories for children. Today’s average 6- to 11-year-old child consumes 20 percent more sugar-sweetened beverages than children did in the late 1980s.

Sugar-sweetened beverages are little more than liquid sugar. According to a study published in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association, drinking sugar-sweetened beverages is the only food habit consistently linked to overweight in children. Someone who drinks one can of soda a day can gain, on average, 10 pounds a year in body weight.

Parents can start in the supermarket to improve children’s health by choosing low-fat milk instead of sugar-sweetened beverages.

“It’s important for parents to be good role models and to buy healthful food for their children. Crispy vegetables, tasty fruits, and low-fat or fat-free yogurt can make healthful snack alternatives to candy and chips,” (name of official) said.

To learn more about childhood obesity and how parents can help encourage healthful nutrition, visit the New York State Department of Health web site at http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition.
NEWS RELEASE
September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

“Although prostate cancer remains the most commonly diagnosed cancer among American men, second only to skin cancer, the incidence rate continues to decline,” reports (name and title) of the (local health agency name). Still, in 2012, because of the surge in the numbers of older men, the number of deaths from prostate cancer will increase to more than 2,400 in New York State; and more than 17,000 new cases will be diagnosed.

“Over the course of their lives, one man in six will be diagnosed with prostate cancer,” (name of official) said.

At this time, scientists do not know exactly what causes prostate cancer. However, there are certain factors that increase a man's chance of getting prostate cancer. These include:

- **Age:** As men get older, their chance of getting prostate cancer increases. The majority of cases are diagnosed in men 65 years and older.

- **Race:** Prostate cancer is more common in African-American men than other men. In New York State, African-American men are one and a half times more likely to get prostate cancer and almost twice as likely to die from the disease as Caucasian men.

- **Family History:** A man with a father, brother, or son who has had prostate cancer is two to three times more likely to get prostate cancer than one who does not have a close family member with the disease.

- **High Fat Foods:** Some studies suggest a diet high in animal fat or meat may increase a man's risk for prostate cancer.
“The good news is that most prostate cancers grow very slowly. More than 2.5 million men alive today have had prostate cancer,” (name of official) noted.

Medical experts agree that men should know the risks and benefits before they are screened for prostate cancer. Men should talk to their health care provider about whether prostate cancer screening is right for them.

For more information about prostate cancer, visit the New York State Department of Health Web site at www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/cancer/prostate.
NEWS RELEASE
Secondhand Smoke Kills

Secondhand smoke is nearly invisible and some people are even accustomed to its presence. Don’t let yourself be fooled. Secondhand smoke is deadly, killing more than 3,000 New Yorkers each year. Nationally, about 50,000 nonsmoking adults die due to exposure to secondhand smoke.

“If you are around secondhand smoke, you are actually breathing in 4,000 substances, 69 of which are known to cause cancer,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name). “There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.”

While exposure to secondhand smoke is harmful for healthy adults, it’s even more dangerous for pregnant women, babies and children. A pregnant woman who is exposed to secondhand smoke has a greater chance of having a more difficult delivery, a smaller than average baby or a sick baby.

"Research shows that smoking by pregnant women and exposure to cigarette smoke is a major cause of miscarriages, stillbirths and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS),” (name of official) said.

Secondhand smoke also causes a host of problems for babies and children because their lungs are still developing. If their parents smoke, they are more likely to have lower respiratory tract infections, such as pneumonia and bronchitis. They are also more likely to suffer from middle ear infections, sore throats and colds. Secondhand smoke causes children with asthma or allergies to have longer and more severe attacks.

To protect yourself and those around you::

- Don't allow smoking in your home or car, especially if pregnant women, infants, young children or people with health and breathing problems are present. This
includes family members, visitors, babysitters and anyone else who may work in your home.

- Make sure that children learn and play in smoke-free environments.

- If you smoke, try to quit. If you feel you must smoke, protect the people around you by not smoking around pregnant women, infants, young children or people with breathing problems.

- Keep your home smoke-free by going outside to smoke. If you feel you must smoke indoors, limit smoking to a single room with an open window.

- Don't smoke in a car if there are others with you.

If you are ready to quit smoking, call the New York State Smokers’ Quitline at 1-866-NYQUITS (1-866-697-8487) or go to www.nysmokefree.com to obtain free, confidential services to help you become smoke-free.

For more information about the dangers of secondhand smoke, call the (local health agency name) at (telephone number) or visit the New York State Department of Health website at http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/3432.
Sickle cell disease is an international health problem. Many New Yorkers are under the impression that they will not be affected by sickle cell disease if they are not of African-American descent. In this country, African-Americans are at greatest risk, but others, including Americans of southern European, Middle Eastern, Hispanic and Asian descent are also at risk.

More than 50,000 people in the United States currently suffer from sickle cell disease, according to (name and title) of the (local health agency name). At least 1,000 babies are born with the disease every year in the United States. The disease occurs in about 1 in every 500 African-American births and 1 in every 900 Hispanic-American births.

Sickle cell disease is an inherited disorder that affects red blood cells. People with sickle cell disease have red blood cells that can become hard and pointed, instead of soft and round, during stressful situations. Sickle cells are then destroyed, causing anemia, pain and many other problems.

Sickle cell disease can cause a variety of medical ailments. These range from lung tissue damage to joint pain and stroke. Due to the blockage of blood flow caused by the sickled cells, vital organs can be affected, including the spleen, kidneys and liver.

“Although there is no cure for sickle cell anemia, doctors can do a great deal to help sickle cell patients and treatment is constantly being improved. Treatment is most effective when the disease is diagnosed early,” said (name of official).
Children with sickle cell disease need to stay hydrated. They must consume large amounts of fluid during the day. They are also very sensitive to the cold and may not be able to go outside for recess or gym on chilly days.

Effective medication has helped some patients relieve such symptoms as severe pain, infections, acute chest syndrome and the need for blood transfusions.

“The good news is that sickle cell disease is most often diagnosed at birth. This enables health care providers to begin lifesaving treatment to prevent infections,” (name of official) said.

“It is important to note that an individual diagnosed with sickle cell disease can live a ‘normal’ life. However, similar to patients suffering from other chronic conditions, it is essential that they are managed in a comprehensive program of care and surrounded by a strong extended support system,” (he/she) said.

For more information on sickle cell disease, visit the Sickle Cell Disease Association at http://www.sicklecelldisease.org.
NEWS RELEASE
Skin Cancer Awareness

Summer is here, the sun is shining and it’s time to go outdoors and enjoy the beautiful weather. Before we head outside, the (local health agency name) reminds us that we should take a few simple steps to protect ourselves and our children from the sun’s harmful rays. Unprotected exposure to the sun can cause skin cancer, eye damage and premature aging.

“Protection from the sun is important at any time of the year. The sun sends ultraviolet rays (UV-A and UV-B), which we cannot see. Long-term, unprotected exposure to these UV rays causes up to 90 percent of all skin cancer. In fact, skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

More than one million new cases of skin cancer will be diagnosed in the United States this year, according to the National Cancer Institute. Most of a person’s lifetime skin damage, which increases the risk for skin cancer, occurs before the age of 18.

“Remember, sunburned or tanned skin is damaged skin. Even if a child’s sunburn or tan fades, the damage caused by that tan or burn does not. No matter how hard adults work at protecting their skin, the sun damage they received as children cannot be undone,” (he/she) warned.

The good news is that skin cancer is one of the most preventable forms of cancer. Follow these simple steps for sensible sun protection:

- Keep infants out of the sun for the first six months of life.
- Limit the amount of time children spend in the sun.
- Schedule outside activities for early morning or late afternoon. Avoid the hours of 10am to 4pm when the sun’s UV rays are strongest.
• Keep children in the shade. Use an umbrella or a tent, or use a tree for natural shade. Carriages and strollers with hoods and canopies provide shade for babies and toddlers.
• Cover children up when they are in the sun. Choose clothes, such as long-sleeved shirts and long shorts that are made from tightly woven fabrics. Wear wide-brimmed hats that shade the face, scalp, neck and ears.
• Use sunscreen that has a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher and, to protect the eyes, wear sunglasses that are rated to block close to 100 percent of the sun’s UV-A and UV-B rays.

Be especially careful to protect children from the sun on cloudy or hazy days. Clouds do not block most UV rays. Also, be careful around surfaces, such as sand, cement, water and snow that can reflect the sun’s rays on the skin.

When out in the sun, be aware of the effects of certain medications. Some prescriptions and over-the-counter medications can cause the skin to be more sensitive to the sun.

• Use sunscreen for the best protection from the sun’s rays.
• Choose a sunscreen that offers UV-A and UV-B protection.
• Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going outside.
• Rub a generous amount of sunscreen on all uncovered skin. Do not apply to the eyes.
• Light clothing does not filter out all UV rays, so use sunscreen on areas that will be covered by light clothing.
• Use a sunscreen stick or sunscreen lip balm on sensitive areas, such as the lips, nose, ears, hands and feet.
• Choose a water-resistant or waterproof sunscreen for children playing in the water.
• Re-apply sunscreen every two hours and after you swim or do things that make you sweat.
• Towel-dry your child before re-applying sunscreen if your child is sweaty or has been swimming.

For more information about skin cancer and protecting yourself and your family from the sun’s rays, visit the New York State Department of Health web site at http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/cancer/skin.
NEWS RELEASE
STD Prevention & Screening

The most effective way to treat and prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) begins with screening. Screening is testing for a disease in someone who doesn't have symptoms. For many New Yorkers, STD screening is a part of routine health care. (Name and title) of the (local health agency name) recommends the following steps:

- **Everyone** - The one STD screening test that everyone between the ages of 13 and 65 should have is a blood or saliva test for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS. People who have new or multiple sex partners or have other risks should consider repeat testing. Most health care settings offer a rapid HIV test with same-day results.

- **Pregnant women** - Screening for HIV, hepatitis B, Chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis generally takes place at the first prenatal visit and sometimes later in pregnancy.

- **Young women who are sexually active** - All sexually active women under age 25 should be tested for Chlamydia and gonorrhea. This test uses a sample of urine or vaginal fluid. Even if you’ve had Chlamydia or gonorrhea before, you can get it again. It is important to have your sex partner(s) tested and treated, to not re-infect each other.

- **Women ages 21 to 66** - The Pap test screens for cervical abnormalities, including inflammation, precancerous changes and cancer, which is caused by certain strains of human papillomavirus (HPV). Women should have a Pap test at least every three years.

- **Men who have sex with men** - Compared with other groups, men who have sex with men have a higher risk of catching STDs. Many public health groups recommend at least annual screening for HIV, herpes, gonorrhea, Chlamydia and syphilis.

- **People with HIV** - If you have HIV, it dramatically raises your risk of catching other STDs.
With improved testing and treatment, most people with access to health care can avoid the long-term consequences of STDs. The (local health agency name) strongly encourages these guidelines to offer the greatest possible margin of safety.

- Before any serious sexual contact, communicate with your partner about practicing safer sex. Reach an explicit agreement about what activities will and won’t be OK.
- Talk with every new partner about getting tested for STDs and HIV, and wait until you both are STD free before having vaginal or anal sex.
- Use a latex or polyurethane condom every time you have intercourse. For oral sex, use a condom or dental dam to prevent contact with your partner’s bodily fluids.
- Use water or silicone-based lubricant with latex condoms. Oil-based products such as petroleum jelly make the condom weak and easy to break.
- Having sex while sober means that you’re more likely to make better choices. Using alcohol or drugs can lower your inhibitions and take more risks.
- Stay with one sex partner who doesn’t have any STDs and HIV, and who only has sex with you.

For more information about preventing and treating STDs and HIV, visit the New York state Department of Health website at

NEWS RELEASE
Tuberculosis

There are still many myths about tuberculosis (TB) which contribute to the difficulty of controlling this disease.

“Many people still think that TB is now a disease of the past, or that it affects only the very poor. Although the number of tuberculosis cases here has declined each year since the early 1990s, in 2010 there were still more than 900 cases in New York State,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

People at higher risk of developing active tuberculosis include those with medical conditions, such as diabetes, cancer, and HIV, that have weakened their ability to fight infections,” (he/she) said.

Tuberculosis is an infectious bacterial disease that usually infects the lungs, but can attack almost any part of the body. The bacteria that cause TB can be spread through the air when a person who has active TB of the throat or lungs coughs, sneezes, or speaks. Anyone who is around a person with active TB can become infected, but it usually requires prolonged close contact.

There is a difference between being infected with TB and having active TB disease. Someone who is infected with TB has TB bacteria in their body; but their immune system is protecting them from the bacteria, and they are not ill.

It is estimated that about 10million Americans are infected with TB. About 10 percent of these people are likely to develop active TB in their lifetime. People with active TB disease are ill, and if they have TB in their lungs or throat, they can spread the disease to others. They need to see their health care providers and get treatment as soon as possible.
People likely to have higher rates of TB infection are those who:

- are known close contacts of a person with infectious TB disease;
- are foreign-born, from countries with high rates of TB infection;
- are residents of (or work in) congregate settings, such as nursing homes, prisons, homeless shelters, and hospitals or residential facilities with people at high risk for TB.

People at higher risk of active TB disease after TB infection include those who:

- have HIV infection;
- have been infected with TB within the last two years;
- have an existing medical condition, such as diabetes or renal failure;
- are undergoing treatments that can suppress the immune system;
- are infants or children under the age of 5 years;
- are alcohol or substance abusers.

“A simple tuberculin skin or TB blood test – available from doctors or from the (local health agency name) can determine whether or not a person is infected with TB. Further tests will be needed to learn if the TB infection is active,” (name of official) said.

Symptoms of TB include fever, night sweats, fatigue, weight loss, a persistent cough, and, in some cases, coughing up blood. Left untreated, TB can be fatal. But it’s almost always treatable with a long course of antibiotics to kill the bacteria.

Unless you are in one of the risk groups TB is probably not a threat to you. However, if you think you are at risk, have any of the symptoms listed above, or have any reason to be concerned, talk with your health care provider or contact the (county health agency name) at (telephone number). For more information, visit the New York State Department of Health website at

NEWS RELEASE
Water Safety

It’s time to uncover the barbecues and get out the bathing suits. While everyone gears up to enjoy the warm weather, the (local health agency name) wants us to enjoy the season safely.

This summer make sure everyone is safe in and around the water. Drowning claims the lives of more than 4,000 people every year, but most of these deaths can be prevented.

Children up to four years old have the highest death rate due to drowning. In most cases, a drowning or near-drowning experience can occur quickly, for instance when a child falls into a pool or is left alone in the bathtub.

“Constant adult supervision is the best way to keep young children safe in and around the water,” said (name and title) of the (local health agency name).

(Name of official) advises following these water safety rules:

- Always swim with a “buddy”. Never swim alone.
- Parents with small children should share supervisory responsibilities with a lifeguard.
- Never leave a child alone near water at the pool, the beach or in the tub. A tragedy can occur in seconds.
- Children or inexperienced swimmers should take precautions, such as wearing a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device, when around the water.
- Do not use air-filled swimming aids (such as water wings) in place of personal flotation devices.
- Don’t overestimate swimming ability or underestimate the water depth. Currents can be deceiving and treacherous, posing a risk for even the strongest swimmers.
- Don’t dive into unknown bodies of water. Jump feet first to avoid hitting your head on a shallow bottom.
- Enter headfirst only when the area is clearly marked for diving and has no obstruction.
- Do not mix alcohol with swimming, diving or boating. Alcohol impairs judgment, balance and coordination, and affects swimming and diving skills.
Properly fence in your swimming pool and always supervise children using the pool.

Remove toys from in and around the pool when not in use.

Power or manual covers will completely cover a pool and block access to the water, but be sure to drain any standing water from the surface of the pool cover. A child can drown in very small amounts of water.

“Enroll children over age four or when they are developmentally ready in swimming classes taught by qualified instructors. Keep in mind that lessons don’t make your child ‘drown-proof’,” (name of official) said.

When you are in or around water, watch out for the dangerous “too’s” – too tired, too cold, too far from safety, too much sun, too much strenuous activity. Try to be knowledgeable about the water environment you are in and its potential hazards. Deep and shallow areas, currents, depth changes, obstructions and entry and exit points are all important to note. Pay attention to local weather conditions and forecasts. Stop swimming at the first indication of inclement weather.

Always have a first-aid kit and emergency phone contact handy. Parents should be trained in CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).