



# HEALTH BEAT 2008

Cattaraugus County Health Department Newsletter  
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## COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS OF THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT

**Q.** Can you tell me about the Statewide Immunization Registry Law?

**A.** This law requires your child's doctor to record any immunizations given to your child into a secure web-based registry. This electronic system is called the New York State Immunization Information System (NYSIIS). Your child's immunization record will include past and future immunizations until your child is 19 years old. All immunizations already given will be entered into one record. This record will provide official immunization information for your child to go to school, day care, or camp. It will also help your child's doctor to know which immunizations your child needs. Your child's record will be secure and private and only those parties authorized by the Department of Health will have access.



**Q.** Is Lyme disease still a risk for New York residents?

**A.** Yes, Lyme disease has become an important public health problem in New York State. Lyme disease is spread by the bite of infected deer ticks. Domestic animals, such as dogs and outdoor cats, may also become infected with Lyme disease bacteria, and some of these animals may develop arthritis. Please see page 2 for the complete article regarding Lyme disease.

**Q.** What is drowsy driving?



**A.** Drowsy driving is classified as either falling asleep when driving or not paying attention to the road or traffic around you. It can be just as dangerous as driving drunk, because falling asleep even for a few seconds can result in serious injury or death to you or someone else. There are ways to avoid it, such as taking brief naps on longer trips or switching to another licensed driver if you are experiencing signs of sleepiness. The warning signs of drowsy driving include, but are not limited to, inability to stop yawning, difficulty keeping your eyes open, inability to recall the last few miles driven, and daydreaming or disconnected thinking. Other signs can include sloppy driving, such as weaving between lanes, missing traffic signs, or driving on the rumble strips on the shoulder of the road.

**Q.** How serious is asthma to children?

**A.** Asthma is one of the most common health problems in New York State and the nation. Please turn to page 3 for the complete article about managing your child's asthma.



**Q.** My husband does not have a yearly checkup from his doctor. Can this be harmful to his health?

**A.** Men often make their health a low priority. It is a known fact that simple awareness of preventable health problems and early detection and treatment of disease can make a profound difference in the quality of life. For this reason, the week before Father's Day is celebrated as "Men's Health Week". Please see page 4 for the complete article about Men's Health Week so that your husband can see the importance of checkups and screenings.



| In This Issue                      |        |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| Frequently Asked Questions.....    | Page 1 |
| Lyme Disease.....                  | Page 2 |
| Asthma.....                        | Page 3 |
| Men's Health.....                  | Page 4 |
| What Can Your Health Dept. Do..... | Page 4 |



## LYME DISEASE



Spring is here, which means it's time for New Yorkers to take precautions to protect themselves from Lyme disease. Lyme disease has become an important public health problem in New York State.

Lyme disease is spread by the bite of infected deer ticks. Ticks cannot fly or jump. They like to rest on low-lying vegetation and attach to a passing animal or person. Once on a body, ticks often attach to the more hidden areas such as the groin, armpits and scalp.

Campers, hikers, outdoor workers and others who frequent wooded and tall grassy areas will be more likely exposed to ticks. Because new homes are often built in wooded areas, transmission of Lyme disease near homes can be a concern in some areas of the state. The risk of exposure to ticks is greatest along trails in the woods and on the edges of properties with tall vegetation, but ticks may also be carried by animals and pets into lawns and gardens.

Early stages of Lyme disease are usually marked by one or more of the following symptoms and signs: fatigue, chills and fever, headache, muscle and joint pain, swollen lymph nodes, and/or a "bull's eye" red rash appearing on the skin at the site of the bite.

Lyme disease is often difficult to diagnose, because its symptoms and signs mimic those of other diseases. Left untreated, Lyme disease can produce severe arthritis, or cause neurological or cardiac problems. However, with early detection and treatment with antibiotics, recovery from Lyme disease is usually rapid and complete.

Domestic animals, such as dogs and outdoor cats, may become infected with Lyme disease bacteria, and some of these animals may develop arthritis. Dogs appear to be more at risk from Lyme disease. Symptoms in dogs include lethargy, joint pain, fever, fatigue and kidney damage. While there is debate about whether cats suffer from Lyme disease, cats are thought to be highly resistant to the disease.

You can decrease your chances of being bitten by a tick by following a few precautions:

- √ When in wooded and grassy areas, wear light colored clothing (to spot ticks) and tuck pants into socks and shirt into pants.
- √ After every two to three hours outdoors, check for ticks on clothing or skin. Brush off any ticks on clothing before they can attach to your skin. Also, check your children and pets for ticks.
- √ Do a thorough tick-check of your entire body at the end of the day. Pay particular attention to the back of the knees, behind the ears, the scalp, the armpits and your back.
- √ If you decide to use tick repellent, apply carefully following label directions.
- √ Children may be at greater risk for reaction to repellents, in part because their exposure may be greater. Do not apply repellents directly to children. Apply to your own hands and the put it on the child. Never apply to the hands of small children.
- √ No one should apply repellents near eyes, nose or mouth. Also use it sparingly around ears.

If any ticks are found, they should be removed immediately. Use fine-tipped tweezers to carefully grasp the mouth-parts of the tick close to the skin, and then gently and steadily pull the tick out without twisting or squeezing.

After removing the tick, wash the bite area thoroughly, apply antiseptic, and mark the area to watch for symptoms. Gasoline, kerosene, petroleum jelly or hot matches should never be used to remove ticks.

# MANAGING YOUR CHILD'S ASTHMA

Asthma is one of the most common health problems in New York State and the nation, especially among inner-city and preschool-aged children. Recently, the number of people with asthma has grown at such a rapid rate that it is called an epidemic.

In New York State, asthma now affects more than 1.1 million adults and more than a quarter-million children. It is the fourth leading cause of disability among children under 18.

Parents need to know about this long-lasting lung condition. It is especially important to learn how to prevent and manage asthma attacks.

At certain times, asthma makes it hard to breathe. If your child has asthma, his or her airways get sore, swollen and very sensitive. They react strongly to things that your child is allergic to or finds irritating. When this happens, less air goes into the lungs. An asthma attack is when someone with asthma wheezes (makes a whistling sound when breathing), coughs, has a tight chest, and has trouble breathing, especially at night and early morning.

Asthma can't be cured, but these attacks can be managed, allowing kids with asthma to lead active lives. If your child has asthma, it is very important that you see a doctor to develop and stick to an asthma action plan for your child. This may include taking medicine.

It is also important that you do not smoke. Smoking will make your child's asthma worse.

Help your child avoid contact with things that might cause an asthma attack such as tobacco smoke, cockroaches, dust, dust mites, pets, mold, and some chemicals. These items are called "triggers" because they may start an attack. Triggers vary from person to person.

Even babies can have asthma. If your family has a history of allergies and/or asthma, your baby may be more likely to develop asthma. It may first show up as several days of wheezing after a cold, or a tight-sounding cough at night. If you notice your baby has wheezing, coughing, trouble breathing, or shortness of breath, take him or her to a doctor to be checked.

Sometimes you will need to see the doctor more than once to make sure that the wheezing is caused by asthma and not by congestion from a cold. If your doctor says your child has asthma, he or she will probably give you medicine to help keep your baby's airways open. Usually you are also told to reduce possible sources of allergies in your baby's environment. Some ways to do this are to get rid of items that collect dust and keep pets out of your baby's room.

When your child has asthma, it's important to have a regular pediatrician who can follow your child's progress and see how he or she reacts to different treatments.

For more information on living with asthma, visit the New York State Department of Health website at [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov). The Department of Health website also includes information about health insurance for you and your child.



Don't Let Asthma Knock the Wind Out of Your Child.





# MEN'S HEALTH

Each June, the week before Father's Day is celebrated as "Men's Health Week." In 2008, Men's Health Week will be observed from June 9 to 15.

The Cattaraugus County Health Department wants you to have the facts about men's health. Many men continue to ignore their health. Poor health education and poor health behaviors in the lives of men continue to contribute to a growing crisis in men's health.

Men often make their health a low priority. But many causes of illness are easily preventable. It's a fact that simple awareness of preventable health problems, and the early detection and treatment of disease, can make a profound difference in the quality of life. Early detection by such routine exams as prostate screenings, blood pressure checks, cholesterol testing, colorectal cancer screenings – even such simple tests as those for blood sugar and overweight – can play an important role in staying healthy. Unfortunately, many men resist seeking routine medical check-ups.

From childhood on, men are taught to minimize their health concerns. When a small boy skins his knee, he's often told "big boys don't cry." Later in life, when a man has chest pains, he's 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 are the best ways to prevent health problems from becoming more serious.

Men are less likely than women to see a physician regularly, and are significantly more likely to be disconnected from the health-care system. They are often extremely reluctant to admit that there might be anything wrong until a problem is too severe to ignore. This reluctance is a contributing factor in the growing health disparities between men and women. The difference in life expectancies between the genders is now more than five years.

Men have higher rates of heart disease and cancer, and higher rates of chronic problems such as high blood pressure and dangerously high cholesterol problems. These are problems that are often treatable if they are detected early. And, of course, there are problems such as prostate and testicular cancers that are unique to men. Men need to see their healthcare providers to assess their personal risks for various problems.

Men should take the occasion of "Men's Health Week" as a perfect opportunity to make an appointment with their doctor or other health care provider. A routine check-up can find a problem before it's serious and contribute to a longer life with a better quality of life.

For more information on Men's Health Week, visit the Men's Health Week web site at <http://www.menshealthweek.org>.



## Do You Know What Your County Health Department Can Do For You?

- ◆ Breast/Cervical and Colorectal Cancer Screenings
- ◆ Environmental Health Services
- ◆ EMS (Emergency Medical Services)
- ◆ Laboratory Services
- ◆ Long Term Home Care
- ◆ Certified Home Health Care
- ◆ Immunizations



- ◆ Health Education Programs
- ◆ WIC
- ◆ Early Intervention Programs
- ◆ Family Planning Clinics
- ◆ STI Clinics
- ◆ Osteoporosis Screening
- ◆ Child Safety Seat Program
- ◆ Rabies Clinics

Office sites in Olean, Machias, Salamanca and Little Valley. Phone 716-373-8050 or 1-800-251-2584