



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.  
**Yates County, NY**

# Health Counts



A Quarterly Newsletter from Yates County Public Health

Fall 2016

## Influenza

This time of year we want to prepare for what the fall / winter seasons will bring. We do not know if we will have a bad flu season. All we can do is look at what has happened in the Southern Hemisphere with flu viruses. In fact, that is how the flu vaccines are created for us. The World Health Organization and scientists study what viruses are circulating in the Southern Hemisphere and include these strains of viruses in the vaccine that is created for countries in the Northern Hemisphere. This process has already been done last winter for us because the vaccines take several months to grow in the cultures in order to prepare a large supply of vaccine for us this Fall.

Now, it is up to us to take the initiative to get the flu vaccine ahead of any outbreaks in our country. We need to allow our bodies time to build antibodies to the virus strains in this year's vaccine. This immunity typically takes about 2 weeks to develop. That is why we should have the vaccine before illness arrives at our doorsteps. Remember, flu vaccine does not cause flu illness.

Everyone age 6 months and older should consider getting the flu shot. Do not rely on someone else around you to get the vaccine if you can get it too. Talk with your doctor and ask if you are able to be vaccinated. Some people cannot be vaccinated if they have a severe allergy to eggs (the culture flu vaccines are developed within) or if they have had a serious reaction to vaccines in the past. These people can be protected from illness if those around them get the vaccine and do not spread flu to them. This is called "herd" immunity, and it works!

Babies younger than 6 months cannot get the flu vaccine, so those loved ones surrounding them can protect the baby from flu by being vaccinated. This is called "cocooning" and it works. Babies and others who get a serious case of flu may need to be hospitalized. Serious flu illness can become a life threatening situation for some. Anti-viral medication can be prescribed for flu, if caught early enough. This year the flu vaccine is the injectable type, since the intranasal spray is not available. Plan to get your vaccine as early as possible.



*Public Health Director, Deborah Minor, reminds Yates residents to change their smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector batteries to make sure they are in good working order for the upcoming heating season. A simple process like changing batteries can help save lives.*

1. Influenza and smoke alarms & carbon monoxide detectors
2. Great American Smokeout and Breast Cancer
3. Antibiotic resistance and Lead Poisoning
4. Radon and Rabies Clinic Schedule



The Great American Smokeout banner on display on Penn Yan's Main Street—so plan the “Quit” on November 17, 2016

Chronic disease is the leading cause of death and disability for residents of Yates County. And, one major cause of chronic disease is **entirely preventable—tobacco use**. Since tobacco cannot be separated from nicotine, tobacco use is addictive. Nicotine is one of the most powerful addictive substances, and, it is poisonous in a concentrated form. Children should never be allowed to touch tobacco butts or ash trays because the nicotine residue is in a concentrated form. Tobacco smoking or chewing releases nicotine into the body where it is picked up in the blood and travels to receptors in the brain. After experiencing nicotine, these receptors crave the substance, which makes tobacco use very addictive and hard to stop.

Every day smokers and chewers quit the tobacco habit successfully though, because they want to avoid the dangerous side effects of tobacco use. This “Quit” can be done. It takes work, but one can be successful at pulling away from this strong addiction. It takes time to clear the lungs of the tars and carcinogens that remain from tobacco use, which may cause coughing while the lungs are trying to heal after the “Quit”. Of course, never using tobacco is the ideal, but quitting is well worth the effort. In minutes, hours, weeks, months, and years the body rids itself of the substances in tobacco, offering a healthier future, free of the daily assault of tobacco carcinogens. Tobacco use has been studied and proven to be linked to:

- Heart and blood vessel disease
- Hypertension
- Stroke
- Cataracts
- Various types of cancers of the lung, trachea, esophagus, mouth, lip, throat, larynx, stomach, pancreas, colon, liver, bladder; nearly every organ in the body

Tobacco smoke can also be the cause of by-standers asthma, sudden infant death syndrome, ear & respiratory infections, and allergies. Home fires can be added to the list of dangerous side effects of tobacco use too. It is time to make the call to the NYS Smokers Quitline at 1-866-697-8487 or call Yates County Public Health to learn about help with cessation at 315-536-5160. Look around our community and notice that smoke-free zones are making this a better place to live, work, and play in a healthier environment.

## Breast Cancer

Through research and common screening practices like clinical breast exams, mammography, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), self exams, or genetic testing, breast cancer is not the death sentence it once was. Cancerous tumors are being found much earlier in the disease process when they are more treatable due in part to new screening technology that provides better views of breast tissue. But, one needs to keep on a routine for screening in order to find any developing tumors.

During the month of October, we celebrate our advancements in attacking this disease, so that more people, women and men, can have hope for recovery and longevity.

Recent screening recommendations are as follows:

\*For people of average risk, **ages 50-74**, get a mammogram every 2 years or as your doctor recommends

\*For those of average risk, **ages 40-49**, talk with your doctor about when to should start screening and how often you should have a mammogram.

Possible symptoms of breast cancer to look for include: a new lump, thickening or swelling, irritation or dimpling of breast skin, redness or flaky skin, pulling in or pain in nipple area, nipple discharge, change in size or shape of breast, or pain in the breast.

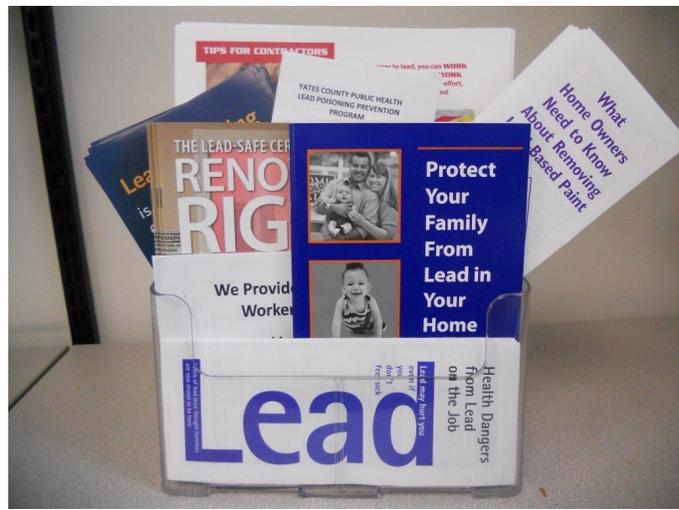
If you are uninsured and need services, contact the Cancer Services Program for help at 1-866-442-2262 or contact Yates County Public Health for information.

To learn more about breast cancer, go to:

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

## Antibiotic Resistance

With flu season just around the corner, you may want to prepare yourself by getting the flu shot in time for your body to develop immunity to the strains of viruses that are included in this year's vaccine. So, why would the topic of antibiotic resistance come up in this discussion? Follow along for the reasoning behind this. Often times when people get sick with various kinds of respiratory illnesses like colds or influenza, they go to their doctor and ask for a prescription of antibiotics to clear their infection so they don't feel so miserable. But, if the infection is caused by a virus, an antibiotic is useless. Antibiotics were developed to attack bacterial infections. With over-use of antibiotics, we have set ourselves up for a very dangerous set of circumstances. Bacteria seem to be clever little critters that can adapt themselves to new environments quite well, including exposure to antibiotics. Studies have been done using cultures of bacteria and antibiotics to fight these bacteria, and in just a short time, the bacteria over-run the antibiotic because they have developed a resistance. This puts people & animals in danger because "superbugs" are being created that do not respond to any medications we now have. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have warned of this alarming threat. 700,000 people around the world every year have died from infections for which there are no medications. What can we do? Pharmaceutical companies may develop new antibiotics, but it can take up to ten years to develop a successful antibiotic before it can be marketed. Meantime, we need to practice good handwashing, get vaccines, practice healthy habits like covering coughs & sneezes, and stay home when sick.



- Get the Lead Out -

## Lead Poisoning

Lead contamination has been in the news lately with a city in the Midwest testing positive for lead in the drinking water. This is nothing new because antiquated water systems used lead pipes. When water stands in these pipes for a while, lead is picked up and travels into the home for drinking or cooking purposes. Many community water supplies will have this common problem if they still have the older water system infrastructure. Homes on well water may also have lead issues if the pipes are old lead pipes. It is always a good practice to let the water run for a couple of minutes when you first turn on the tap each day. It is never recommended you use water from the hot tap for cooking purposes.

Why are we so concerned about lead? Lead poisoning is a problem for anyone living in a home built prior to the removal of lead from paint in 1978. Old paint chips and wears down overtime, dropping lead residue forming into dust inside and outside a home or structure. When children touch surfaces where lead dust is, they may ingest the poison through hand-to-mouth habits. In New York State, by Public Health Law, all children ages 1 and 2 should be blood tested for lead poisoning. If the test shows an elevated level of lead, steps need to be taken to eliminate the lead sources to lower the blood lead levels in the child. Lead poisoning has serious health and behavioral consequences for children. Lead poisoning robs children of their potential, placing them on an unhealthy path for physical and mental development.

Some researchers believe that many people who have been imprisoned for various offenses, may have been lead poisoned as children and set off on a path of self destruction because their IQ was lowered and their tendency for impulsive behavior uncontrolled. These symptoms can be some of the effects of lead poisoning.

Adults can be lead poisoned through exposures in their work environment too. With high enough blood lead levels, anyone can have a life-threatening level of poisoning. To learn more about lead poisoning, contact Ann, the Lead Poisoning Prevention Case Manager at Yates County Public Health.

## Radon

Yates County has been selected for a grant that will offer information and test kits to test for radon gas in residents' homes and schools, specifically low income homes or housing complexes. Free radon test kits will soon be available to Yates residents through the Yates County Public Health Department.

So, what is radon? Radon is a colorless, odorless gas that migrates to the earth's surface through rocks, soil, and water as a result of the breakdown of uranium, a radioactive element in the earth's crust. It seeps into buildings through cracks and crevices in the foundation and drifts to all levels of a building, with possibly dangerous levels inside the home being reached. Radon is the **second leading cause** of lung cancer in New York state, with only smoking placing a person at greater risk for lung cancer. The EPA estimates that 20,000 deaths are caused by breathing radon gas annually.

Radon gas is measured in picocuries per liter, a measurement of radioactivity. Radon gas is found in every state, with some areas having a greater concentration than others. A simple test will tell you if your home has a high level of radon gas. The test kits can be set up on a level of your home where you spend the most time. The kit information will describe the best place to set up the test kit. The test may take between 2 and 7 days, after which you would immediately pack up the testing piece and send it in to the testing site listed. You will receive the results within a few weeks. If your home has radon levels at or above 4 picocuries per liter, the EPA and the U.S. Surgeon General recommend you have the home inspected by a certified mitigation specialist for repairs. The cost of repairs depends upon how your home was built and how you use it for living. The NYSDOH website lists certified mitigators nearest you or you can contact the Radon Outreach Worker for help. The outreach worker will be contacting schools, housing agencies, realtors, lending institutions, contractors, and service organizations to educate the Yates population about radon. For more information on how to obtain a radon test kit, call Yates County Public Health at 315-536-5160.



Be a best friend to your pet; vaccinate on time to prevent rabies!



## Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about our services and programs.

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Visit us on the web at:  
[www.yatescountypublichealth.org](http://www.yatescountypublichealth.org)  
or on Facebook



Office hours:  
Monday—Friday  
8:00 am —4:00 pm  
(closed 12 Noon—1:00 pm)

### Upcoming 2016 Rabies Clinics:

\***Saturday, October 1st**—Dundee Village Barn,  
25 Spring St., Dundee, 9:00—10:30 Am

\***Saturday, November 5th**—Yates County  
Maintenance Garage, 415 Liberty Street, Penn Yan,  
9:00—10:30 Am

Watch for the 2017 Rabies Clinic Schedule that  
will be posted early in 2017.

Rabies Vaccine saves lives too!

**Yates County Public Health**  
417 Liberty St.  
Suite 2120  
Penn Yan, NY 14527



YC Public Health's Jennifer Green and Kathy Swarouth spoke about "Rabies" to YC 6th graders at the 2016 Conservation Field Day at beautiful Keuka Lake State Park in September.



Lobby Display for September 2016—  
Topic—Influenza



Ann Murphy, Nurse from YCPH, talks with staff at Pre-Emption Family Medicine about the Lead Care II machine that they will use to test Blood Lead Levels of children in this provider office.

Lead Poisoning Prevention is a practice in which everyone can participate. Ann Murphy, Yates County Public Health's Lead Poisoning Prevention Case Manager, leaves no area of Yates County without information on what can be done to keep Yates children from becoming lead poisoned. Check out displays at area hardware/paint & building & home supply businesses to learn how to put prevention into practice.

