



April 2026 Newsletter - Downeast Public Health Council

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Downeast Public Health Council April 2026 Newsletter



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National Public Health Week



Click on the image to watch the video

Next Downeast Public Council Meeting Friday, May 15, 2026

10:00 - 12:00 PM

[Eagle Hill Institute](#)

For Council information, please
contact [Al May](#)



[Downeast Public Health
Council Facebook Page](#)

[Maine CDC Downeast District
Webpage](#)

To become a member of the
Downeast Public Health
Council please fill out our
[Membership Application](#).

Downeast Public Health 2026
Priority Committees

[National Public Health Week](#) (NPHW, April 6-12) is celebrated in April to recognize how public health has improved daily lives, safeguarded families, expanded life spans and strengthened communities.

[CE Winslow \(1920\)](#) defined public health as "the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts and informed choices of society, organizations, public and private communities and individuals." This is achieved by work promoting healthy lifestyles, disease and injury prevention research, and preventing, detecting and responding to infectious diseases.

Public health, for more than 150 years, has reshaped what's possible in the United States adding decades to life expectancies and dramatically improving quality of life. These achievements were a result of public health workers.

Public health professionals try to prevent problems from happening or recurring through several activities such as education, policy recommendations, service administration and research. Their mission is different from clinical professionals who focus on treating individual patients rather than protecting the entire population.

During the NPHW, thank and honor public health workers who show up everyday and advocate for policies and practices that promote good health for all:

- Health Inspectors
- Health Educators
- Community Health Workers
- Social Workers
- Epidemiologists
- First Responders
- Occupational Health and Safety Professionals
- Scientists, Researchers and Biostatisticians
- Policymakers
- Public Health Physicians and Nurses

Learn more: [Public Health](#)

World Immunization Week

The World Immunization Week (April 24-30) is also celebrated in April to promote how vaccines have safely protected people, families and communities for

Prevention Committee:
Angela Fochesato, Chair

Older Adult Health and Safety Committee: Dante Zaroni, Chair

Emergency Operations and Response Committee:
Andrew Sankey, Chair

Mental Health Primary Care Education Committee: Tracy Parker, Chair

2024 Ongoing Topics
Health Literacy

Palliative Care and Hospice

Maternal and Child Health

Final 2025 CHNA Reports:

[State of Maine](#)

[Hancock County](#)

[Washington County](#)

Events/ Trainings

February- August
[ACOG: Critical Access & Rural Health Learning Collaborative Series](#)

April 14, 15 & 16

[ICS 300 & ICS 400](#) (Portland, ME)

April 23
[Mass Care Shelter Identification](#)

April 29

generations and continue to protect our futures. Vaccines are one of the most powerful tools in public health.

Since 1974, vaccines have saved more than 150 million lives and protected people against 30 life-threatening diseases and infections.

Vaccines protect individuals and communities against diseases like measles, diphtheria, pertussis and polio. Scientific advancements have helped in the development of newer vaccines against HPV, meningitis, RSV, Ebola and Mpox.

Learn more: [WHO- World Immunization Week 2026](#)

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Minority Health



NIMHD defines minority health as "all aspects of health and disease in one or more racial/ethnic minority populations as defined by the OMB." While health disparities are defined as "a measurable difference in health that exists between specific population groups." These disparities may be observed in risks, incidences, prevalence, problems or mortality resulting from conditions, diseases and/or disorders or specific behaviors.

On average, low socioeconomic status, rural and specific racial and/or ethnic minority populations have higher rates of most chronic diseases, medical comorbidities and other health problems related to the overall population. Health disparities are also observed among people living with disabilities and those who identify as LGBTQ.

Addressing disparities

[LHO Webinar: Mold- Overview and Updates](#)

May 27

[Cybersecurity Essentials](#)
(Online & In-person: Poland, ME)

More training and exercises:

[PHEP Calendar](#)

[LHO Upcoming Trainings and Resources](#)

News

[State Hosted Informational Webinar on Maine's Rural Health Transformation Program](#)

[Strengthening Families, Together](#)

[MaineCare Cost and Enrollment Growth: A Cross-State Comparison](#)

[OPEGA Report Affirms Strong Payment Performance to Child Care Providers](#)

[Maine CDC Announces Another Four Measles Cases; No New Exposure Locations Identified](#)

HANs

[U.S. CDC: Medetomidine in the U.S. Illegal Fentanyl Supply Increasing Risk for Overdose and Severe Withdrawal Syndrome](#)

[Respiratory Syncytial Virus \(RSV\) Circulation and Extending the Availability of](#)

These disparities require a comprehensive approach and analysis of how health is maintained, improved or worsened via modifiable influences such as access to care, adverse environmental and macro-level exposures that may effect individual factors like inherited conditions, gene expressions, lifestyle and behavioral factors. Activities can focus on:

- Needs assessments through data collection and analysis
- Addressing barriers in access to care
- Workforce needs and development (diversity and cultural competency)
- Cross-sectoral collaborations and partnerships

Learn more:

[NIMHD](#) (*National Institute of Minority Health & Health Disparities*)

[HHS| Minority Health](#)

Alcohol Awareness Month

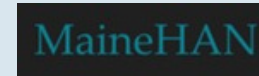


Alcohol is the most misused substance in [Maine](#) by youth and adults. Consuming alcohol has many downsides and concerns about the risks of drinking are on the rise. Alcohol is associated with many problems especially if consumed excessively, some which are:

1. Liver diseases

[RSV Monoclonal Antibody Product Through April](#)

[Measles Exposure in Maine](#)



Testicular Cancer Awareness

Testicular cancer is the most common type of cancer in men between the age of 15 and 44 years. On average, one man is diagnosed every hour with more than 9,000 cases and 630 deaths expected in the U.S. this year. In Maine, the incidence of testicular cancer was 13.4/100,000 population, higher when compared to states with lower incidences (2001-2017).

Risk Factors

1. Undescended testicle
2. Family history
3. Young Adult 15-45
4. White race

Testicular cancer is not preventable yet, however 95% of cases can be cured if detected early. Early detection is critical to eliminate the need for additional surgeries, chemotherapy or radiation, additionally it eases the financial and emotional burden on patients and their families.

[Testicular Cancer Awareness Foundation](#)

2. Higher risk of hypertension, heart failure and dementia
3. Increased risk of cancer
4. Higher risk of injury
5. Lapses in judgment
6. Increased risk of depression, anxiety and addiction
7. Fetal alcohol syndrome
8. Alcohol poisoning

Recent studies have linked drinking to higher rates of cancer in the liver, breast, mouth, throat, esophagus and colon. In 2025, the Surgeon General issued an advisory recommending that alcohol beverages carry new labels warning of alcohol-cancer link and highlighted that no safe low level of alcohol consumption has been established.

Data

The rate of alcohol associated new cancer cases in Washington County was found **significantly higher** at 174.7/100,000 when compared to Hancock County and State rates (2019-2021).

What you can do:

- Support school policies by promoting restorative practices, providing resources to educators and collaborate with youth groups such as [MYAN](#)
- Promote campaigns that help people make intentional choices
- Provide trainings and toolkits for employers about substance use
- Educate pregnant people about the harms of substance use during pregnancy and while breastfeeding
- Develop a clear policy for liquor sales and service for your business to prevent violations, improve safety and reduce risks in your communities.

[Maine CDC| Substance Use Prevention](#)

[U.S. Surgeon General| Alcohol and Cancer Risk](#)

[SAMHSA| Find help](#)



National Healthy School Day

April 13

Empower your organization and host an inspiring event that educates and celebrates your school and community working towards healthier, safer learning environments for every child.

[Plan Your Activity](#)

[Register Your Event](#)



STI Awareness Week

April 13- 18

Sexually Transmitted Illnesses also known as Sexually Transmitted Diseases are very common. Millions of new infections occur every year in the U.S. that are caused by viruses, bacteria, fungus or parasite and transmitted through sexual contact (vaginal, anal or oral). Even though these infections are common, however they are preventable and treatable.

Ground Water and Private Wells Series

Now that you have tested your well water and received the report, learn how to read the test results and what to do with unsatisfactory results.

Check your results for:

1. Elements tested
2. Levels above health guidelines
3. Watch this [video](#) to understand your results

In the Downeast District, 16.8% of wells in Washington County and 21.7% of wells in Hancock County exceed state guidelines for Arsenic (>10 ug/L).

If the results report contamination with bacteria, chemicals or other elements:

1. Immediately switch to bottled water
2. You may need to [disinfect or shock your well](#) depending on the contaminant
3. If contaminated by sand-salt pile visit DEP site
4. Find the right [water treatment solution](#) for your home
5. If you need assistance apply for [Well Water Abatement Program](#).

Note that boiling water will not remove chemicals but only reduces the chance of getting sick from bacteria found in your well water test results.

PFAS in well water

PFAS are manufactured chemicals that have been used in industry and consumer products since the 1940s, with thousands of PFAS chemicals found in many products making it challenging to study and assess their full risks.

Most people have some level of PFAS (forever chemicals) in their blood as we are all exposed to it through contaminated food and water or living/working near facilities where PFAS is made or used.

Higher levels of PFAS (above 20ng/L) can have certain health impacts such as increase cholesterol levels,

Some examples of STIs include-- Bacterial Vaginosis, Chlamydia, Herpes, Gonorrhea, HPV and syphilis. Other conditions like HIV and Viral Hepatitis do not always spread sexually.

Data

The Downeast District has lower rates of STIs reported to Maine CDC like Chlamydia (117.7), Gonorrhea (18.1) and Syphilis (3.4) [rates per 100,000 population].

However that does not change the fact that testing is important because many STIs exhibit no to mild symptoms.

[Maine CDC| STI](#)

[Get Tested](#)

Earth Day

April 22

All individuals and communities worldwide have a role in sustaining environmental protections that affect the cost of living, public health, infrastructure reliability and long-term stability.

Support clean air, water and energy, and protect natural resources and climate stability by:

Taking Community Action:

organize a clean-up and a community meeting, plan teach-ins

Take Individual Action: grow an organic garden, plan a tree and switch to reusable bags

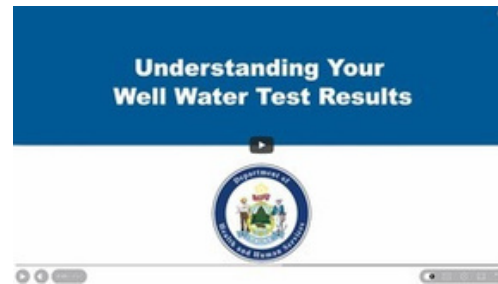
[Other Action Steps](#)

cancer risk, fertility issues and decrease infant and fetal growth.

EPA recommends regular testing of well water for PFAS.

[Accredited PFAS Labs for Maine](#)

[PFAS Testing in Private Wells](#)



Next issue- how to prevent well water system malfunction and contamination and how to know your well needs cleaning.



'Behold, my friends, the spring has come, the earth has gladly received the embraces of the sun, and we shall soon see the results of their love!'

Sitting Bull (Thathajka Iyotake), a Lakota (Teton) Chief and leader of Oceti Sakowin (Sioux) peoples (1831-1890)

Downeast Public Health District an

Age-Friendly Public Health System



Sources: U.S.CDC, Maine CDC, Maine DEP, Maine Tracking Network, EPA, APHA, CDC Foundation, Science.org, NIH: NIMHD, HHS, Harvard Blogs, SAMHSA, EarthDay.org, HealthySchools.org, TCAF, Sage Publications, Mayo Clinic, WHO, Maine Shared Community Needs Assessment Reports (CHNA).

If you have any questions, please contact Alfred May, District Liaison or Kawther Mohamed, Public Health Educator.