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# December 2025 Newsletter - Downeast Public Health Council

Maine Department of Health & Human Services sent this bulletin at 12/16/2025 12:35 PM EST

## Downeast Public Health Council December 2025 Newsletter



DOWNEAST PUBLIC HEALTH COUNCIL

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### Winter Weather



Severe winter weather conditions are typically portrayed by low temperatures, strong winds and large quantities of snow. The following types of winter storms are experienced in Maine:

- Blizzards
- Ice storms
- Sleet storms
- Snow storms

Every winter, Maine is susceptible to extreme weather conditions, including heavy snowfall, ice storms, freezing rain combined with high winds. The seasons for snowfall usually begins in late October or November to April and sometimes extends into May.

#### How to prepare?

When a blizzard or winter storm warning is announced, people must act immediately. Additional terminology that can be used to describe winter weather include wind chill temperature, winter storm outlook or watch and winter weather advisory. Learn more [here](#).

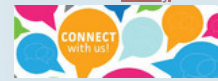
Before a storm:

#### Next Downeast Public Council Meeting

Friday, January 16, 2026  
10:00 - 12:00 PM

[Virtual](#)

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 2025 Priority Committees

**Prevention Committee:** Angela Fochesato, Chair

**Older Adult Health and Safety Committee:** Dante Zanoni, 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](#)

1. Plan to stay warm
2. Gather emergency supplies
3. Learn emergency skills like first aid or CPR
4. Plan to stay connected by signing up for emergency alerts and obtaining a battery-powered radio

During a storm:

1. Stay safe
2. Stay aware of frostbite or hypothermia signs and act fast
3. If driving: check car emergency supplies kit, travel during daylight, inform someone about your travels.

After a storm:

1. Stay safe
2. Take care of yourself: contact disaster distress helpline at 1-800-985-5990 or 988
3. [More recovery tips](#)

### Hypothermia

Long-term exposure to extremely low temperatures results in hypothermia as the body loses heat more quickly than it produces it, leading to lower body temperature. This has negative impact on the brain, making the person unable to move or think coherently, which makes it particularly dangerous. Signs include shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech or drowsiness. If someone shows any signs of hypothermia, they should get to a warm shelter and seek immediate medical attention as it is a medical emergency.

### Frostbite

Frostbite is an injury where a body part freezes after being exposed to cold causing the affected areas—usually the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers and toes—to lose feeling and color. Frostbite can result in irreversible damage to the body and subsequent amputation. Signs include redness or pain, white or grayish-yellow skin, firm or waxy skin and numbness. If someone shows any signs of frostbite, get to a warm shelter and seek medical attention if the condition does not improve.

### How to prevent hypothermia and frostbite?

- Stay indoors and warm during periods of very cold weather
- Dress in warm layered clothing with a water-resistant jacket and boots.
- Cover head, face, fingers, ears and mouth.
- If spending time alone outdoors, inform someone about your travels and pack extra food, blankets and warm clothing.

### What organizations can do?

- Schedule cold jobs for warmer months or warmer part of the day
- Use relief workers or allocate extra workers for longer jobs
- Provide warm fluids to workers
- Limit amount of time spent outside on extremely cold days.
- Monitor and train workers on cold stress and cold-related illnesses and how to prevent them.

### Information:

[Maine Emergency Management Agency Winter Preparation](#)

[Washington County](#)

### Events/ Trainings

#### Winter Trainings

[HIV/Hep C Rapid Testing Training Registration](#)

January 8

[MGT414 Critical Infrastructure Resilience and Community Lifelines](#)

January 13 & 14

[G290: Basic Public Information Officer Course](#)

January 26 & 27

[ICS-400](#)

[More training and exercises: PHEP calendar](#)

### News

[Raccoon in Wells Tests Positive for Rabies](#)

[Maine CDC and DOE Release 2025 Student Health Survey Results](#)

[Maine CDC Alerts Consumers About Recall of ByHeart Whole Nutrition Infant Formula Due to Botulism Risk](#)

[CBHS: Building a Stronger Future for Maine's Children and Families](#)

### HANs

[Recommendations for Hepatitis B Immunization](#)

[Recommendations for HIV Testing and Prevention Among People Who Inject Drugs](#)

[Recommendations for Diagnosis of and Prevention of Shigellosis](#)

[Recommendations Related to Infant Botulism Linked to Powdered Infant Formula](#)

[Pertussis Testing, Antibiotic Treatment, and Isolation](#)

### World AIDS Month

HIV is a virus that attacks the body's immune system, and without treatment, it can lead to the development of AIDS.

It is very crucial to test for HIV testing because starting HIV medicine soon after getting the virus has more benefits than starting later.

HIV testing is very simple—may clinics, substance use programs, community centers and hospitals offer testing. Self-testing is also available: kits can be purchased at pharmacies or online.

**U.S. CDC HIV Testing Recommendations:**

[NWS Winter Weather Preparedness Checklist](#)

## Seasonal Influenza



Influenza or flu is an infectious respiratory illness caused by viruses that infect the respiratory system: nose, throat and lungs.

There are two types of influenza viruses that are considered human influenza viruses; Type A and B routinely spread among people and are responsible for seasonal flu epidemics every year. Influenza viruses spread mainly by droplets from people with the disease through cough, sneeze or talk, and less commonly through touching contaminated surfaces or objects.

### Signs and symptoms:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Sometimes vomiting and diarrhea

### Some populations are more at risk of getting the disease and more likely to experience severe complications like:

- Older adults (65 years and older)
- Children younger than 2 years old
- People with respiratory conditions like asthma, COPD and cystic fibrosis
- People with BMI of 40 kg/m2 or higher
- People with weakened immune system due to HIV/AIDS, cancers, chemotherapy, radiation, corticosteroids or other medications.
- People with neurological/neurodevelopment conditions, blood, endocrine, kidney, liver and metabolic disorders and those with heart disease or stroke.
- Pregnant women and 2 weeks post-partum
- People living in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities
- Certain racial and ethnic minority groups: non-Hispanic Black persons, Hispanic or Latino and American Indian or Alaska Native persons

## How to prevent the flu?

### Influenza Vaccine

Getting the influenza vaccine every year is the best way to prevent the flu. The vaccine has demonstrated its ability to reduce flu-related illnesses and the risk of serious complications that can lead to hospitalization or death. Seasonal flu vaccines in the U.S. are developed to protect against three influenza viruses that are known to cause human epidemics however they do not protect against other type of influenza like C (mild illness causing) or D (affects mainly cattle) or animal-origin viruses.

- At least once a year for people with **certain risk factors**
- At least once for those 13- 64 years of age
- At least once for all adults 18 years and older
- At least once for all pregnant persons during each pregnancy

### Additional Recommendations from Maine CDC:

- At least every 3 months for persons with ongoing risk factors
- Include testing for other STIs and viral hepatitis

### Find HIV Service Locator

<https://locator.hiv.gov/>



### International Day of Persons with Disabilities (December 3)

This day seeks to raise awareness of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of individuals with disabilities, highlighting the importance of securing the rights of people with disabilities, so they can completely engage, equally and effectively in society alongside others, and encounter no barriers in any aspects of their lives.

### Resources:

[211Maine](#)

[OADS](#)

[Maine Disability Resources](#)



### Smoking and Quitting Resolutions

Cigarette smoking is a significant public health concern with over 16 million Americans suffering from smoking-related diseases. 23.3% and 19.8% of people residing in Washington County and Hancock County smoked in 2021, both **higher** than the state and national averages. Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body and causes many diseases such as cancer, heart diseases, lung

When and who should get the vaccine?

- Everyone 6 months and older, especially people at higher risk
- Flu vaccine should be administered yearly, ideally by the end of October
- Young children, pregnant, chronic conditions, older adults 65 years and older
- Healthcare workers
- People who live with or care for people at high risk

**Handwashing**

Frequent handwashing is another way to prevent the flu and other diseases in addition to distancing, practicing cough etiquette and avoiding touching the eyes, nose and mouth. Proper handwashing techniques with soap and clean, running water or using alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol content can be used when soap and water are not available to stay healthy and safe.

Key times to wash hands:

- Before, during and after preparing food
- Before and after eating
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- After using the toilet
- After blowing the nose, coughing or sneezing
- After touching visibly dirty or wet surfaces and objects

**What can organizations do?**

- Promote flu vaccination at workplace, schools and in the community
- Encourage kids and adults to make handwashing part of everyday routine
- Share social media graphics and messages
- Print stickers and place flyers on bathroom mirrors
- Distribute fact sheets to share information about hand hygiene
- Promote handwashing on and around awareness days
- Remind employees to wash their hands often with soap and water
- Provide accessible sinks, soap, water and a way to dry hands
- Place visual reminders in bathrooms or kitchen areas
- Provide other hygiene supplies such as tissues, hand sanitizers and no-touch trash cans
- Report influenza-associated hospitalizations, influenza-associated deaths in children less than 18 years old and influenza and influenza-like illness outbreaks to the Maine CDC ([Rules for the Control of Notifiable Conditions](#))

**Information:**

[More about Influenza virus types](#)

[Handwashing FAQs](#)

[Find Statements on Vaccines and Autism on Maine Immunization Program Update November 26, 2025](#)

diseases, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and others.

One of the most crucial step to enhance health and lower the risk of premature death is quitting smoking. Regardless of how long or how much a person smoked, quitting lowers the risk of smoking-related-diseases including cancer, heart diseases and COPD.

**How to stop smoking:**

1. Counseling: group or one-on-one counseling, coaching, online resources, free texting program, or mobile app.
2. Quit-smoking medicines: [seven medicines approved by the FDA](#), some available over-the-counter such as nicotine patch, gum and lozenge, while others require a prescription
3. Counseling plus medication

**Resources:**

[Maine QuitLink](#)

1-800-QUIT-NOW

[CDC.gov/quit](#)

<https://smokefree.gov/>

Text QUITNOW to 333888

Mobile Application [quitSTART](#)

[American Lung Association](#)



"December is the time for remembering the past and reaching toward the future."

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

Sources: Maine CDC, U.S. CDC, MeDHHS, MEMA, American Red Cross, Maine Tracking Network, Maine QuitLink, American Lung Association, Smokefree.gov, NSW, Maine Shared CHNA reports.

**Downeast Public Health District is now an [Age-Friendly Public Health System](#)**



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