



## February 2026 Newsletter - Downeast Public Health Council

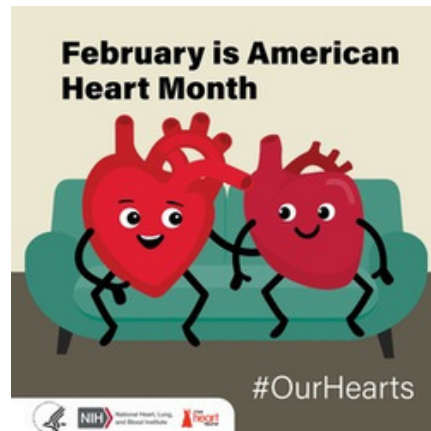
Maine Department of Health & Human Services sent this bulletin at 02/12/2026 10:02 AM EST

### Downeast Public Health Council February 2026 Newsletter



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### American Heart Month



#### Next Downeast Public Council Meeting Friday, March 20, 2026

10:00 - 12:00 PM

Zoom

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](#).

American Heart Month is observed annually to shed light on cardiovascular diseases, which are the leading cause of death in the U.S. and in Maine.

Cardiac arrest happens when the heart's electrical system suddenly malfunctions and stop beating on its own. Ninety percent of the 350,000 cardiac arrests that occur outside of the hospital in the U.S. are deadly. In 2019, there were 2,403 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests in Maine, 85 of them were in Hancock County and 51 in Washington County.

Causes of cardiac arrest:

- Abnormal rhythm- ventricular tachycardia, ventricular fibrillation or bradycardia
- Heart attacks
- Cardiomyopathies
- Some heart medications
- Congenital heart defects
- Recreational drug use
- Electrical heart abnormalities

Cardiac arrest needs treatment right away, some treatments like CPR and the use of AED can be done before reaching the hospital. If CPR is administered right away, a person's chance for survival can double or triple. However, only 41% of people who experience cardiac arrest receive CPR from bystanders while waiting for emergency responders.

#### What can you do?

Join and contribute to the American Heart Association's goal of doubling cardiac survival by 2030:

1. Be prepared join the **Nation of Lifesavers** by learning CPR and the use of AED
2. **Host** a CPR and AED training course at your workplace, college, school and community centers.

#### Information:

AHA: American Heart Month

U.S. CDC: American Heart Month

#### Downeast Public Health 2026 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](#)

[Washington County](#)

#### Events/ Trainings

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

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

**February 24**  
[G191: ICS/EOC Interface](#)

**February 25**

# National Cancer Prevention Month



An estimated 2 million Americans received a cancer diagnosis in 2025, and the disease claimed the lives of over 600,000 people. Preventable causes include smoking, being overweight, physical inactivity, and long-term sun exposure account for 40% of these cases.

## Cancer Facts and Data:

- Maine has significantly higher cancer rates when compared to the U.S.
- Maine has higher rates of lung and bronchus cancer, urinary bladder cancer and melanoma of the skin.
- Washington County had a significantly higher cancer incidence rate of 558.4 per 100,000 than other Maine counties.
- Overall cancer incidence rate significantly declined from 2006-2011 but has since remained stable.

[LHO Webinar: Yard Garbage, Junk and Autos: risks, requirements and resources](#)

March 15

[LHO Webinar: Hoarding - local strategies](#)

More training and exercises:

[PHEP Calendar](#)

[LHO Upcoming Trainings and Resources](#)

## News

[Preliminary 2026 Open Enrollment Data Shows Rising Affordability Challenges for Mainer's Health Coverage](#)

[Strengthening Children's Behavioral Health Services in Maine](#)

[One Dashboard, Three Viruses: Maine CDC's New Tool for Tracking Respiratory Illnesses](#)

## HANs

[Measles Exposure in Maine](#)

[Recommendations for Diagnosing and Treating Neurosyphilis, Ocular Syphilis, and Otic Syphilis](#)

[US CDC: New World Screwworm: Outbreak Moves into Northern Mexico](#)

[New Maine CDC Respiratory Virus Dashboard Available](#)

MaineHAN

### Modifiable Risk Factors:

1. Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of cancer linked to 17 types of cancer (*lung and bronchus, digestivesystem, headandneck, urogenital andhematopoietic system*).
2. Excess body weight, poor diet, physical inactivity and alcohol consumption attribute to more than 20% of new cancers and 18% of cancer deaths.
3. Excessive alcohol consumption increases the risk for at least 7 types of cancer and is linked to more than 200 diseases.
4. UV radiation exposure from the sun, sunlamps and tanning beds can lead to skin cancer.
5. Certain bacteria, viruses and parasites can increase a person's risk of several types of cancers such as HPV, HBV, HCV and H. Pylori.
6. Environmental exposure to carcinogens like arsenic, asbestos, radon, lead and other chemicals can increase the risk of cancer.
7. Hormonal factors such as birth control, pregnancy and breastfeeding can influence women's risk of developing certain gynecologic cancers.

Numerous risk factors can be changed or controlled, therefore lifestyle preventative measures may be able to prevent a significant percentage of cancer cases.

### Information:

[AACR Cancer Progress Report](#)

[UPDATED Maine Cancer Plan 2021-2030](#)

## Ground Water and Private Wells Series

Last issue we talked about the types of water wells and which type is easily contaminated. Today our focus is on the type of contaminants, their sources and health impacts.

Private wells can be contaminated by both naturally occurring sources and by human activities. Commonly found contaminants in wells include:

- Microorganisms

### National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

February 7

This day is dedicated to raise awareness about the disproportionate impact of HIV on Black and African American people.

Racism, HIV stigma, discrimination, homophobia, poverty and other barriers to health drive disparities in HIV diagnosis:

- New HIV diagnosis: Black 38%--White 24%
- Median HIV stigma score: Black 29-- White 26
- Unmet need for mental health services: Black 29%-- White 20%

Learn more: [HIV: Fast Facts by Race and Ethnicity](#)



### National Wise Health Care Consumer Month

This observance provides a chance to teach people how to be more involved in their own healthcare:

1. Take the time to carefully select a doctor or health care provider.
2. Prepare for visits to your health care provider
3. Ask questions about medications you are

- Nitrates and nitrites
- Heavy metals
- Organic chemicals
- Radionuclide
- Fluoride

These contaminants can occur from:

- Leaks from landfills
- Septic systems malfunction
- Leaks from underground fuel tanks
- Water runoff from cities and industrial buildings
- High level of naturally occurring chemicals- arsenic, radon, etc. in land around the well
- Feces from animal feedlots

The CDC estimates that at least 1.1 million people in the U.S. get sick every year from germs in their drinking water. Contaminants can have several health impacts depending on the type:

1. Legionella, Norovirus, E. coli, Cryptosporidium and Giardia caused outbreaks linked to private drinking water in the U.S.
2. High levels of nitrate and nitrite are most serious for infants and can cause blue baby syndrome which is due to reduction of the blood's ability to carry oxygen.
3. Heavy metals contamination such as arsenic, copper, lead and others increase the risk of acute and chronic toxicity, liver and kidney damage, anemia and cancer.
4. Just like heavy metals, high levels of organic chemicals can cause damage to the kidney and liver in addition to circulatory, nervous and reproductive systems.
5. Drinking water high in radioactive elements such as uranium and radium can cause toxic kidney effects and increase the risk of cancer.
6. Even though fluoride can be helpful in preventing tooth decay, excessive consumption can lead to skeletal fluorosis, dental fluorosis, tooth discoloration and pitting of teeth.

Learn more [here](#).

prescribed

4. Keep a checklist of all medications you are taking
5. Be aware of routine medical tests and examinations, and the recommended times to have them.

#### What your organization can do?

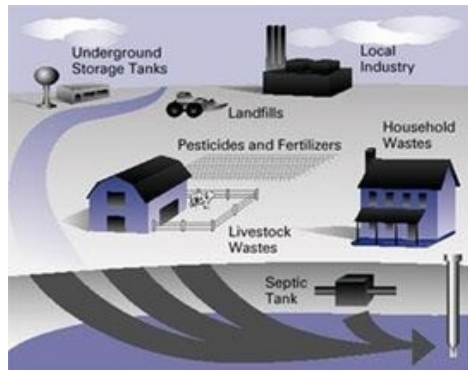
1. Start a self-care program
2. Ask for success stories
3. Teach employees about their health benefits
4. Display a self-care "doctor-bag"
5. Host a doctor-patient communication workshop
6. Provide the right tools
7. Evaluate care performance
8. Emphasize prevention
9. Get kids involved

#### Wise Health Care Consumer Month Toolkit



*'Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it.'* Lou Holtz (1937 - )

*Sources: U.S.CDC, Maine CDC, AHA, Maine EMS, DAFS, EPA, AACR, NCI-SEER, NIH, American Institute Preventive Medicine, Maine Shared Community Needs Assessment Reports (CHNA).*



*Next issue- well water testing.*

*Downeast Public  
Health District an  
Age-Friendly Public  
Health System*

