



## May 2026 Newsletter - Downeast Public Health Council

### Downeast Public Health Council May 2026 Newsletter



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### Wildfires and Air Quality

#### 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](#)



Wildfire is an unplanned fire that burns out of control in a wilderness area like a forest, grassland or prairie. Wildfires can start from natural causes, such as lightening, but they are often caused by humans, such as campers or hikers. They spread quickly consuming everything in their path from trees, brushes, vegetation, homes and other structures.

Maine is the most forested state in the U.S. with an average of 650 wildfires burning about 550 acres annually and are mostly caused by humans. Historically, forest fires have been considered one of the most significant hazards in the State. In 1947, Maine suffered its largest forest fire disaster in modern history. There have been 137 wildfires reported in the Downeast District and Penobscot county in 2025, that ranged from hours to weeks.

Smoke from wildland fires can degrade air quality in the U.S. Air quality is the measure of the concentration of pollutants are in the air which includes particulates and gaseous pollutants. The U.S. Air Quality Index is EPA's color-coded tool for communicating about outdoor air quality and health. Air pollution impacts in one area of the state may be different from impacts in

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Downeast Public Health  
Council please fill out our  
[Membership Application](#).

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#### **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

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#### **Final 2025 CHNA Reports:**

[State of Maine](#)

[Hancock County](#)

[Washington County](#)

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#### **Events/ Trainings**

**May 19- 20**

[33rd Maine Geriatrics  
Conference](#)

**May 20- July 29**

[Project EHO: Ageism](#)

another area depending on the varying topography and season.

Wildfire smoke is a complex mixture that consist of pollutants that lead to a variety of health effects. While everyone can be affected by wildland fire smoke, healthy adults usually are not at major risk from wildfire smoke. However, people with heart or lung disease, older adults, children and teenagers are more likely to be exposed are at increased risks of experiencing health effects. Smoke from wildfire can not only make outdoor air unhealthy to breathe but can also affect the indoor air quality.

#### **Wildfires/ During Poor Air Quality Days:**

- Limit time spent outdoors
- Stay inside with windows and doors closed
- Avoid strenuous activities such as running
- Run air conditioners continuously
- Install high efficiency air filter
- Use portable HEPA air cleaner
- Don't burn anything inside
- If spending time outdoors, it is advised to wear a personally-fitted N95 mask

#### **Information:**

[Wildfire Danger Report](#)

[Air Quality Forecast](#)

[Wildfires and Public Health Effects](#)

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## **Women's Health**

**May 21**

[Preparation Saves Lives:  
Strengthening Your School's  
Suicide Prevention,  
Intervention, and Postvention  
Protocols](#)

**May 27**

[Using Motivational Interviewing  
& Goal Setting to Support a  
Tobacco &  
Nicotine-Free Lifestyle](#)

**May 27**

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

**June 24**

[LHO Webinar: Maine CDC  
Disease Surveillance Update](#)

**June 9**

[ACOG Rural Health Learning  
Collaborative: Supporting Rural  
and Frontier Hospitals](#)

**June 25**

[TMaH and MHTF Conference](#)



Mother's Day marks the beginning of the National Women's Health Week (NWHW) which highlights women's health conditions and encourages women of all ages to prioritize their physical, mental and emotional well-being.

From puberty until menopause, sex-specific hormones have major impact on the regulation of physical, emotional and metabolic process. The development, effect and response to treatment are impacted by sex-specific variances like in cardiovascular diseases, autoimmune diseases and osteoporosis.

A women's life is significantly impacted by pregnancy, delivery and postpartum period. Certain health conditions or issues put the mother's and infant's health at greater risk such as:

1. Diabetes
2. Hypertension
3. Depression
4. Alcohol consumption
5. Tobacco use

#### Maine Data:

#### More training and exercises:

##### [PHEP Calendar](#)

##### [LHO Upcoming Trainings and Resources](#)

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#### News

[Children's Behavioral Health: Understanding the Rule Changes](#)

[EAAA Ellsworth Access Center Grand Opening](#)

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

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## MaineHAN

[Ongoing Investigation of Contaminated IV Sets from ICU Medical](#)

[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 RSV Monoclonal Antibody Product Through April](#)

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#### Tobacco use in Pregnancy

Tobacco smoking during pregnancy is linked to serious

| Indicator                | Washington County | Hancock County | Maine |
|--------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------|
| Adequate Prenatal Care   | 84.0%             | 83.2%          | 84.1% |
| Breastfeeding            | 72.5%             | 80.2%          | 86.5% |
| Low birth weight         | 11.0%             | 4.9%           | 8.0%  |
| Smoking during pregnancy | 16.3%             | 8.4%           | 7.2%  |
| WIC Utilization          | 48.0%             | 27.2%          | 24.3% |

Source: Maine CDC (2026), MCH Dashboard

By understanding the intersection of hormonal, biological, and environmental factors, both individuals and healthcare providers can make more informed decisions, leading to more individualized care and improved health outcomes at every stage of life.

#### Information:

[NWHW 2026 Focus Areas](#)

## Maternal Mobile Health Units

Maternal health refers to the health and well-being of women throughout pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum. This May the [Maternal Mobile Health Units](#) are coming to the Downeast District in partnership with the Maine CDC and support from Maine Families, Help Me Grow, WIC and other programs. The services provided include MaineCare applications, screening and lactation support, car seat checks, diapers, nutritional support and guidance, tooth varnish, tobacco prevention counselling and many more. Mothers and families can visit or refer friends/relatives/clients/patients to the following locations:

- [Milbridge on May 20](#)
- [Blue Hill on May 21](#)
- [Calais on May 22](#)

perinatal hazards, such as low birth weight, clefts, fetal development restriction, placenta problems, and preterm labor. Furthermore, children born to smokers are more likely to have asthma, respiratory infections, bone fractures, and childhood obesity.

Although stopping smoking at any point during pregnancy will help babies have a better start in life, it is best to encourage individuals to do so before getting pregnant.

#### Maternal Services

**Organizations Referral:** If you have a client or a patient that needs help with smoking cessation- use this referral form: [Client Referral Form](#)

**Individual Self-Referral:** If you are pregnant and smoking- use the self-referral form to access free, confidential support to help you quit smoking or vaping: [Self-Referral Form](#)



#### Melanoma and Skin Cancer Awareness

Over 6 million Americans are diagnosed with skin cancer each year, making it a frequent

## Information:

[Maternal and Child Health Program](#)

[Maternal and Child Health Dashboard](#)

# Lyme Disease Awareness



[A message from Maine CDC:](#)

**Every year is a big year for tickborne diseases – this year is no exception.**

Ticks are already out and active in Maine. Each year, Lyme disease and other tickborne diseases affect the lives of thousands of people in Maine. We need your help to spread the word about tickborne disease prevention. May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month (LDAM), which is the perfect time to spread the word about tick bite prevention!

**The best way to prevent tickborne disease is to prevent tick bites.** Tick activity is increasing as the weather warms. As a result, we all need to use proper protection methods against ticks and the germs they may carry every day. **This year's Lyme Disease Awareness Month theme is "Tick Free Zone."**

illness in the country.

Squamous and basal cell carcinoma are the most prevalent nonmelanoma skin cancer types, and they hardly ever spread to other areas of the body. However, melanoma, a deadly and severe type of skin cancer, has greater potential to invade adjacent tissue and migrate to other areas of the body.

## Data:

-There were 545 new cases of melanoma diagnosed in Maine, 2022.

-The 5-year relative survival rate of 93.5%.

-Hancock County had a significantly higher rate of new melanoma skin cancer cases (40.5/100,000) than in Maine (26.6/100,000) and Washington county (38.5/100,000) between 2019-21.

## Prevention:

- Avoid excessive exposure to UV radiation
- Treat sun-damaged skin
- Wear sunscreen
- Wear long protective clothing
- Wear an approved wide-brimmed sun hat to protect your head, ears and face

## Screening:

- Conduct [visual self-exams](#)

### Ways to stay tick free:

- **Know** when you are in tick habitat and take precautions in places where ticks may live.
- **Wear** light-colored long-sleeved shirts and pants. Tuck pants into socks.
- **Use** an EPA-approved repellent like DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus. Pre-treat clothing with permethrin.
- **Shower** when you come inside from outdoor activity. This can help remove crawling ticks. Put clothes in the dryer on high heat for 15 minutes before washing to kill ticks on clothes.
- **Check** your whole body for ticks after outdoor activities and at least once per day. Check family members and pets, too.

### Ways you can help people in Maine stay tick free:

- **Be social.** Check out Maine CDC's social media channels on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), and [X](#). Share and be part of the conversation!
- **Make a post.** Maine CDC provides ready-to-use tick prevention social media content for you to use. Visit [www.maine.gov/lyme](http://www.maine.gov/lyme) to get started.
- **Share a newsletter.** Does your organization have a newsletter? Share tick bite prevention information! [Check out these messages](#) to download and use.
- **Play a video.** Share one of Maine CDC's short educational videos, available [here](#).
- **Schedule a media interview.** At Maine CDC, we love to talk about how people can protect themselves from tickborne disease. If you are a member of the media, contact Lindsay Hammes at [Lindsay.Hammes@maine.gov](mailto:Lindsay.Hammes@maine.gov) to schedule an interview.
- **Host a tick talk.** Want to share tickborne disease prevention info with your organization? Host a tick talk. Email [disease.reporting@maine.gov](mailto:disease.reporting@maine.gov) to invite an epidemiologist to give a virtual or in-person presentation to your community or organization.

-Schedule an exam with a healthcare provider

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### Mental Health Awareness

Mental health is an aspect of daily existence. It influences our way of thinking, feeling, interacting with people, and navigating the world.

Every aspect of life is impacted by mental health, from relationships and community to housing and employment. Substance abuse and mental health issues frequently coexist, and comprehensive care that takes both into account is crucial for long-term recovery and wellbeing.

### What you can do?

-Recognize mental health symptoms early: provide education on the early signs of mental health concerns

-Strengthen the support around your employees and clients

-Respond with care and compassion during challenging moments

Learn more: [SAMHSA](#)

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### National Physical Fitness and Sports Month

May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, an opportunity to promote physical activity's health benefits and encourage people to move.

### Benefits:

- **Put up a poster.** Visit [www.maine.gov/dhhs/order](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/order) to order free educational materials for tickborne disease prevention.

Find more information about tick bite prevention at [Maine CDC: Lyme Disease](#)

## Ground Water and Private Wells Series

Now that we've learned how to test and read well water test results-- here's how we can prevent contamination and keep well water safe:

- Properly construct and continuously maintain the well
- Locate wells in a safe distance from possible sources of harmful germs and chemicals
- Regularly maintaining the well is important- use this [checklist](#)
- Get a well check-up every year
- If a problem is suspected--test the water and check the well
- Retire the well if it is no longer in use by filling and properly sealing it to protect ground water and neighboring wells from contamination
- Learn more [here](#).

Private well systems can also be damaged by freezing temperatures if the pipes and pumps are not properly insulated which can freeze, burst or fail and subsequently lead to costly repairs and interrupted water service. To avoid such damage:

1. Insulate and enclose pipes/ pumps
2. Shut off and drain outdoor lines
3. Plan for power outages
4. Check after cold snaps

***How to know if a well needs cleaning-***

- Maintains good health
- Reduces the risk of chronic diseases
- Supports the overall mental well-being
- Reduces stress
- Improves the quality of sleep
- Boosts performance at school or work
- Strengthens social connections

Learn more: [ODPHP](#)

### Hepatitis Awareness Month

[Viral hepatitis](#) poses a major public health threat and hundreds of thousands of people are unaware that they are infected. It is important to raise awareness about hepatitis A, B and C, encourage testing, vaccination and timely treatment.

#### Quick Facts:

-Hepatitis A (HAV) and Hepatitis B (HBV) are vaccine preventable

-Hepatitis C (HCV) can be cured

-If left untreated, chronic Hepatitis B and C can cause liver damage, liver cancer and even death

-HCV needs to be managed through mitigation of risk factors and appropriate treatments

-Treatments for Hepatitis B are available that can delay or

- The water is turbid (cloudy or has suspended matter)
- The well capacity has decreased
- Water has developed an odor or taste
- Well tests positive for total coliform and/or overall biological activity

reduce the risk of developing liver cancer

**Prevention:**

- TESTING is the first step: talk to your healthcare provider (all adults 18 years and older should be screened for HBV and HCV at least once)

- Get recommended vaccines against HBV and HAV. There is no current vaccine for HCV.

If you have questions about HCV testing and treatment, fill the [Hepatitis C Link to Care Form](#)

More Information on [Hepatitis C](#)

[Infectious Disease Dashboard](#)

[Hepatitis Free NNE](#)

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*‘Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.’*

Marie Curie, 1867-1934, Polish-born French physicist and winner of two Nobel Prizes, one in Chemistry and one in Physics.

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**Downeast Public Health  
District an**

**Age-Friendly Public  
Health System**



*Sources: DACF, FEMA, U.S. EPA, NASA, Maine Tracking, OASH- OWH, U.S.CDC, Maine CDC, WHO, ACOG, Baby&Me Tobacco Free, AACR, SAMHSA, ODPHP, U.S EPA, NWS, ALA, Maine DEP, Wellowner.org.*

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



For more information, visit: [epa.gov/privatewells](https://epa.gov/privatewells)

***Next issue- how to clean well water systems and available resources.***