

Monmouth County Health Department

News Update



January-February 2020

Welcome to the Borough of Highlands

Monmouth County is pleased to welcome the Borough of [Highlands](#) to the Monmouth County Health Department (MCHD) system, which now provides services to [27 municipalities](#) in Monmouth County. We invite the residents of Highlands to explore and explore the vast array of [services](#) offered by the MCHD.

U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report

Is it a Cold or the Flu?		
Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Fever	Rare	Yes, often high (102-104°F); lasts 3-5 days
Headache	Rare	Yes, sudden and can be severe
Aches/pains	Mild	Usual, often severe
Fatigue/weakness	Mild	Yes, sudden and can last 2-3 weeks
Extreme exhaustion	Never	Yes
Stuffy nose	Common	Sometimes
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Sore throat	Common	Sometimes
Chest discomfort/cough	Mild, hacking cough	Common, can be severe

 For more information visit: www.nj.gov/flu

According to CDC's latest [FluView](#) report (from Dec 22 – 28), national levels of flu-like illness have been elevated for eight weeks and continue to increase. The 2019-2020 flu season is underway across the country with 43 states experiencing high or moderate influenza-like illness.

Most people sick with flu have mild illness and do not need medical care or [antiviral drugs](#). (If you get sick with flu symptoms, in most cases, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people except to get medical care.) If, however, you have symptoms of flu and are at high risk of developing flu-related complications, contact your health care provider immediately.

Flu causes more hospitalizations among young children than any other vaccine-preventable disease. The single best way to protect against seasonal flu and its potential serious complications is for children to get a seasonal influenza vaccine each year. Educators and staff can help slow the spread of flu by encouraging children, parents and staff to practice [everyday preventive actions](#).

Heating Season

Carbon monoxide poisoning is caused by inhaling combustion fumes. Carbon monoxide

replaces the oxygen in your red blood cells and prevents oxygen from reaching your tissues and organs. Carbon monoxide gas is tasteless, odorless and colorless.

As all fuel-burning appliances and engines produce carbon monoxide, MCHD reminds residents to never use open flame units to provide or supplement the heat in a residence. Stoves, ovens, kerosene heaters, generators, camp stoves and the like are not appropriate for indoor use and could place you and your family at risk. Please do not forget to check the batteries in your carbon monoxide detectors.

Vaping

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has [issued a policy prioritizing enforcement](#) against certain unauthorized flavored e-cigarette products that appeal to kids, including fruit and mint flavors. Under this policy, companies that do not cease manufacture, distribution and sale of unauthorized flavored cartridge-based e-cigarettes (other than tobacco or menthol) within 30 days risk FDA enforcement actions. In other news, in August 2019, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognized a nationwide outbreak of lung illness. All cases reported that they had recently used e-cigarette or vaping products. The CDC has confirmed 55 deaths in 27 states and the District of Columbia, and more deaths are currently under investigation. The CDC has found that THC, cannabinoid, oil, and vitamin E oil have been detected in most samples tested. CDC continues to recommend that people should not use e-cigarette, or vaping, products that contain THC, particularly from informal sources like friends, or family, or in-person or online dealers.



The MCHD is reaching out and educating the public about the dangers of vaping. The staff held a seminar for Matawan's Boy Scout Troop 66 in Fall 2019 and is currently developing a train-the-trainer for our Medical Reserve Corps' vaping education program where interested parties can take back to their communities.

Ask the Inspector

Do you have a question about a Public Health topic? Restaurants? Body Art? Tanning? Rabies or Animal Control? Septic Systems? Environmental issues? Immunizations? Solid Waste? This is your opportunity to Ask the Inspector. Send your questions to health@co.monmouth.nj.us and we may answer them in an upcoming newsletter.

Q: Why can't they make a flu vaccine that is effective for the flu that is "going around"? You always hear about the vaccine not being a match for the current "strain" and what are they talking about with those H and N letters and numbers?

A: You have asked a very good, (yet very complicated,) question! Influenza viruses are constantly changing. Small changes, or mutations, in influenza virus genes lead to

changes in the surface proteins of the virus. Those proteins, hemagglutinin (H) and neuraminidase (N) are recognized by our immune system, causing our bodies to produce antibodies that can block infection. The numbers assigned to those proteins, [H1N1](#) for example, identify particular strains of viruses.

As viruses replicate, these small mutations result in new viruses that are not identical, but closely related to one another. This means that antibodies that your immune system produces against one influenza virus will likely recognize and respond to similar influenza viruses. This is called cross protection. Vaccine Producers strive to determine which strains are likely to be prevalent in the future and rely on cross protection when trying to produce a vaccine for a virus that does not yet exist.

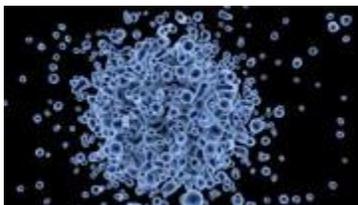
The continual mutations to the H and N proteins we talked about above is referred to as "Drift." Large drifts can affect the vaccines effectiveness. It is this phenomenon of drift that creates the confusion you referenced and is the reason you can get the flu more than once

Even accounting for "Drift," cross protection provides a level of protection that you otherwise would not have and can lessen the symptoms and duration of the illness. For these reasons, the CDC, NJ State department of Health and MCHD recommend you receive a flu shot every year. Flu shots are available from Monmouth County by contacting the MCHD at 732 431-7456.

Is your Vision 2020?

[Vision screenings](#) are provided by the MCHD and NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. A visual acuity test measures your eyes ability to see letters far away and close up. If appropriate, a prescription for eyeglasses will be written. Screenings are held on the second Monday of every month, from 3-6 p.m. at 50 East Main Street in Freehold. For an appointment, call 732-431-7456.

Norovirus Outbreak



Recently there has been a notable increase in Norovirus cases, also known as Stomach Bug, throughout the country. Noroviruses are a group of related viruses that affect the stomach and intestines and cause an illness called gastroenteritis (an inflammation of the stomach and intestines). Anyone can get norovirus and they can be infected with the virus many times over a lifetime. Common symptoms include diarrhea, vomiting and stomach pain. This illness is highly contagious and outbreaks are common due to the ease of transmission. Outbreaks may occur in places where people consume water and/or food prepared or handled by others, such as nursing homes, hospitals, restaurants, cruise ships, banquet halls, summer camps and family dinners. Visit the [CDC's webpage](#) for additional information, as well as tips on avoiding contracting the

virus.



The MCHD provides recommendations and guidance to facilities regarding communicable disease outbreaks. This is important to reduce the spread of disease in the facilities especially in the winter months when influenza and norovirus outbreaks increase.

Board of Health Members

Brian Charnick, Acting President
Ellynn Kahle
Ross Licitra
Andrew Wardell

Freeholder Deputy Director
Susan M. Kiley, Liaison

Christopher P. Merkel M.P.H., H.O.
Public Health Coordinator

Board of Health Meetings

Board of Health Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m., unless otherwise specified in our [Calendar of Events](#). The meetings take place in the Small Conference Room of the Monmouth County Health Department, 50 East Main Street, Freehold, NJ 07728

