

## National Public Health Week Did You Know...

**(Stratford, CT, April 4, 2011)** This week the Stratford Health Department is celebrating Public Health Week; a national campaign to increase awareness about the importance of public health. Think for a moment what you know about public health. What does public health mean to you? You may be aware of flu shot programs or think the health department helps those that have limited access to health care. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), public health is: the active protection of our nation's health and safety, credible information to enhance health decisions, and partnerships with local communities and organizations to promote good health. The goals are to: prevent, promote and protect.

So what does that mean to you? This morning when you brushed your teeth, did you know that fluoridation of water, which started in 1945, was one of the top 10 achievements of public health? Fluoridation has played an important role and has led to a 40%-70% reduction of tooth decay in children and a 40%-60% reduction of tooth loss in adults. Did you know for nearly 30 years, Stratford Health Department has had a School Based Dental Clinic in Johnson House, providing dental and hygiene care to Stratford's children? The clinic is able to offer preventive and restorative care to those children insured through the State Husky plan and at significantly reduced rates for uninsured children.

As you were driving your car to work, did you remember that lead was taken out of gasoline in 1976? It was also removed from paint in 1978. Because of these changes, the number of children with an elevated blood lead level went from 88.2% in the late 1970's to 4.4% in the early 1990's. Stratford Health Department investigates reports of elevated lead levels in children, has offered blood lead screening events for children, exposure training for childcare providers and home lead cleaning kits for homeowners.

When you stop for coffee and a bite to eat this morning, look for the facility license. Public health sanitarians inspect food establishments regularly and review and issue temporary food permits for public events. Educating all food-handlers and consumers about the risks and measures to prevent food contamination has led to increased public safety and decreased foodborne illnesses.

When you make your food choice at your favorite restaurant, remember current public health campaigns advising on healthier food choices to decrease the rates of obesity in the United States. Recognizing the importance of nutrition, Stratford Health Department and the Healthy Stratford Council were instrumental in establishing a Farmer's Market in Stratford, making fresh produce available to the area. After lunch, be sure to take a brisk walk to meet daily requirements for exercise. Currently the health department is offering a Cholesterol Education Speaker Series. Topics will include natural lifestyle modifications, dietary changes and information on medications and exercise. For more information on these programs, visit [www.townofstratford.com/health](http://www.townofstratford.com/health) or call 203-385-4090.

As you remove your seatbelt to get out of the car, remember the public health and safety campaigns that made this a daily ritual. This has led to a reduction in motor vehicle deaths. According to the

CDC, seat belts are one of the most effective tools available for avoiding severe injury and saving lives. Seat belts reduce the risk for serious injury or death by 50%. Use of seat belts has increased during the past 2 decades, from 58% in 1994 to 84% in 2009

While at work today, you see someone sneeze. Did they sneeze into their hand or their sleeve? Why are you aware of this? In 2009 we experienced a flu pandemic; a new H1N1 strain. The swine flu was the first influenza pandemic in 40 years. You may have thought it wasn't so bad – why was it such a big deal? Thanks to the combined efforts of federal, state and local public health with community partners such as physicians, visiting nurse agencies, hospitals, pharmacies and other healthcare providers 454,945 doses of novel H1N1 vaccine were given in Connecticut. Stratford Health Department, in collaboration with the Stratford/Trumbull/Monroe Medical Reserve Core and Stratford VNA, administered nearly 3000 H1N1 vaccinations and almost 1000 seasonal flu vaccines that year. Through the combination of the H1N1 vaccine, flu awareness and hygiene campaigns supported by community educators and media sources, people learned how to protect themselves and their families and prevent the spread of the flu.

As we watch the events unfold in Japan following the devastating earthquake and the after-effects, you can be assured that public health abroad and at home are monitoring this closely. The CDC has a key role in protecting the public's health in an emergency involving the release of radiation that could harm people's health. Their site, ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)), provides information to help people protect themselves during and after such an event. Don't forget to check out information on Personal Preparedness at the Stratford Health Department Booth this summer during the Main St. Festival.

This year's campaign for National Public Health Week is "Safety is NO Accident: Live Injury Free." For further information on National Public Health Week, safety tips and tools, visit [www.nphw.org](http://www.nphw.org). Contact the Stratford Health Department at 203-385-4090 if you have any questions.

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