



# Chatham Health Matters



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January 2019

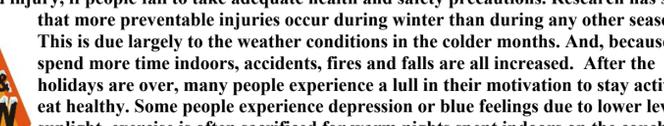
## A Note from the Director of Health, Don Mitchell

### Welcome 2019!



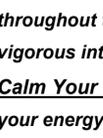
Happy New Year and welcome to the Winter 2019 edition of the Chatham Health District newsletter. I hope that you have all had a relaxing and safe holiday season. It is a new year and as usual change is in the wind. Chatham Health welcomes Melissa Pierce as a new sanitarian to the district. Melissa is a very pleasant addition to our team and will be performing food service inspections among other duties. In other news, our Public Health Nurse (Vickie Han) has earned her RN (yay!) and continues to provide us with exemplary nursing services. The rest of the staff is working hard to provide you all the best services possible. Finally, I will be stepping down shortly from the health director position and finishing my career back in the field as a sanitarian while helping a new health director to get established. I want to thank you all for your guidance and support throughout the past three years. While I don't know who the new director will be yet, I am sure that the "open door" policy will continue to exist for the new director. Best to you all in 2019!

Don Mitchell  
Director of Health



## Winter Health & Safety Tips

The mention of winter brings images of sparkling snowflakes. But winter can also be a time of illness and injury, if people fail to take adequate health and safety precautions. Research has shown that more preventable injuries occur during winter than during any other season. This is due largely to the weather conditions in the colder months. And, because we spend more time indoors, accidents, fires and falls are all increased. After the holidays are over, many people experience a lull in their motivation to stay active or eat healthy. Some people experience depression or blue feelings due to lower levels of sunlight, exercise is often sacrificed for warm nights spent indoors on the couch. Finding the motivation to stay healthy and fit can be difficult, which contributes to a weakened immune system and a greater risk of developing illness or injury. Here are some tips to reduce safety risks and illness during the winter months.



**Diet and Exercise** - Maintaining proper diet and exercise routines is necessary to ward off illness. The American Heart Association recommends adults get 150 minutes per week of moderate intensity aerobic activity. Children 3-5 years old should be physically active with lots of opportunities to move throughout the day. Kids 6-17 should get 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity.

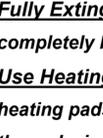


**Calm Your Carb Cravings** - To counter this, try eating a protein-packed breakfast to keep your energy levels up throughout the day or bring a healthy snack with you.

**Omega 3 Fatty Acids** - Omega 3 fatty acids are a healthy type of fat that are found in foods like fish, plant seeds and nuts. Studies have also shown that they help lower levels of depression that people feel in the winter months.



**Eat More Fiber** - Soluble fiber found in apples, oats and nuts is an important way to decrease inflammation and boost the immune system. It also helps reduce cholesterol levels, aids in weight loss and protects against diabetes.



**Eat More Green and Orange Vegetables** - Eating vegetables and fruits that are dark green and orange is important in ensuring you're getting enough nutrients. Spinach, kale, squash, carrots and oranges are all delicious.

**Get Your Vehicle Inspected** - Each year there are approx 480,000 injuries caused by weather-related vehicle crashes. Ensure your vehicle is safe to drive in winter conditions by having the right tires for your local conditions and enough washer fluid for windshield visibility.

**Fully Extinguish All Flames** - Turn off electric fireplaces, extinguish all fires and candles completely before going to bed. Don't leave the house with the fireplace left on or burning.

**Use Heating Devices Carefully** - Space heaters, electric blankets and heating pads can cause serious house fires if not used safely. Only use these devices before bed and unplug them before you go to sleep.



**Smoke Detectors** - Since most house fires occur in the winter, installing & testing smoke detectors is an important safety measure.

**Use Handrails for Stability** - The cold and wet weather can leave stairwells slippery and dangerous. Using the handrails is especially important for seniors who may have balance issues and can be seriously injured by falls.

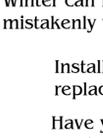
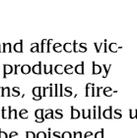


**Frequent Hand Washing** - Frequent hand washing throughout the day is an absolute must during the winter months. It helps protect your immune system, prevents you from developing flu and colds, and protects others around you.

**Head to a Sauna or Steam Room** - If you're experiencing depression or higher levels of stress, steam rooms and saunas can help. They help tense muscles relax and the high temps create sweat, which is a great way to detoxify your body and your skin.

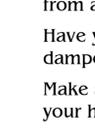
**Take Vitamin Supplements** - Consuming vitamin C will help your body battle cold & flu symptoms, vitamin D helps to supplement the lack of light we experience during winter.

**Practice Meditation and Relaxation** - When you start to feel the winter blues, anxiety and stress, it's important to know how to manage it in a healthy way. Exercise, deep breathing, meditation and mindfulness are great practices for managing stress and anxiety.



**Plan a Vacation** - A winter vacation is a great way to shake off the winter blues and recharge yourself in a healthy way. Planning a getaway to a warmer climate will help lift your spirits and give you something to look forward to.

## Carbon Monoxide and Radon Gas



can happen at any time of the year, but the danger is greater during the winter when doors and windows are closed up tight and fireplaces, gas heaters, or other fuel burning appliances are on. So as the weather turns colder, it's important to take extra precautions.

### Carbon Monoxide



is an odorless, colorless gas that often goes undetected, and affects victims caught off guard or in their sleep. This "silent killer" is produced by burning fuel in cars or trucks, small engines, stoves, fireplaces, grills, fireplaces, gas ranges, portable generators or furnaces. When the gas builds up in enclosed spaces, people or animals who breathe it can be poisoned.

Winter can be a prime time for CO poisoning as people turn on their heating systems and mistakenly warm their cars in garages. Here are some tips to reduce your exposure to CO.

Install a battery-operated CO detector in your home near the bedrooms & check or replace the batteries when you change the time each spring and fall.

Have your heating system, water heater and any other gas or coal-burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.

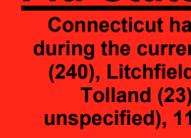
Do not use portable, flame-less, chemical heaters indoors.

Never use a generator inside your home, basement or garage or less than 20 feet from any window, door or vent; fatal levels of CO can be produced in just minutes.

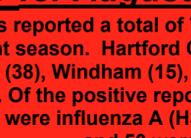
Have your chimney checked and cleaned every year, and make sure your fireplace damper is open before lighting a fire.

Make sure your gas appliances are vented properly and never use a gas oven to heat your home. Never let a car idle in the garage.

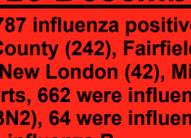
## CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) POISONING



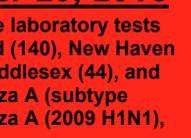
CAN'T BE SEEN



CAN'T BE SMELLED



CAN'T BE HEARD



CAN BE STOPPED

### Radon Gas

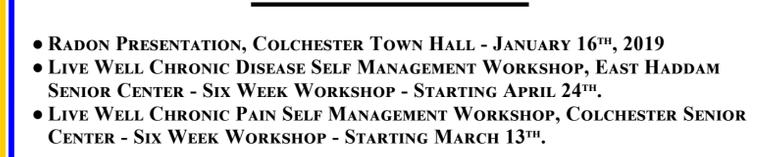
The Chatham Health District urges Residents to Test for Radon Gas during January, National Radon Action Month.

Have you tested your home for radon gas? January is National Radon Action month, and residents are urged to test their homes for radon. Radon is a radioactive gas that you cannot see, taste, or smell. Radon comes from rocks and soils in the ground and enters your home through small cracks and other openings in your basement. When you regularly breathe in radon gas, it increases your risk of getting lung cancer. Public health officials have found that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer, behind cigarette smoking. Radon is also considered to be the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers in the U.S. Scientists and researchers estimate that radon gas causes 15,000 to 22,000 lung cancer deaths each year in the U.S. If you smoke cigarettes & have radon in your home, then your risk of getting lung cancer is even greater. The only way to find out if your home has radon is to test for it. If you need to reduce radon levels, the fixes are relatively easy.

As part of January National Radon Awareness Month, the Chatham Health District has acquired a limited number of radon test kits from the Connecticut State Health Department, while they last. One test kit is available per residence. The test consists of placing a small charcoal canister in the lowest occupied level of the home for 3-7 days. Twelve hours before the test and during the entire test period all doors and windows must be kept closed except for normal egress in and out of the home. Heating and central air systems may be used, but room air conditioners, attic fans, fireplaces or wood stoves may not be used, or readings will not be accurate. Once the test is complete, you will need to mail the kit in for analysis at no charge to you. The results will be sent to you and will not be public information. **Please ONLY take a test kit if you are committed to following the directions and mailing it out. These test kits are in high demand and are very limited.** If you are interested in a test kit, please call 860-365-0884.

## Flu Stats for August 26-December 29, 2018

Connecticut has reported a total of 787 influenza positive laboratory tests during the current season. Hartford (242), New London (242), Fairfield (140), New Haven (240), Litchfield (38), Windham (15), Windham (15), Middlesex (44), and Tolland (23). Of the positive reports, 662 were influenza A (subtype unspecified), 11 were influenza A (H3N2), 64 were influenza A (2009 H1N1), and 50 were influenza B.



### PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE FLU

Besides getting vaccinated, the CDC recommends taking these steps:



Avoid contact with sick people.



If you have flu-like symptoms, stay home until 24 hours after the symptoms disappear.



Disinfect surfaces and wash your hands often with soap and water.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, as germs spread faster that way.



INSTEAD, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue away.

## SAVE THE DATE

- RADON PRESENTATION, COLCHESTER TOWN HALL - JANUARY 16<sup>TH</sup>, 2019
- LIVE WELL CHRONIC DISEASE SELF MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP, EAST HADDAM SENIOR CENTER - SIX WEEK WORKSHOP - STARTING APRIL 24<sup>TH</sup>.
- LIVE WELL CHRONIC PAIN SELF MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP, COLCHESTER SENIOR CENTER - SIX WEEK WORKSHOP - STARTING MARCH 13<sup>TH</sup>.

PLEASE CALL THE CHATHAM HEALTH DISTRICT TO REGISTER FOR ANY OF THESE PROGRAMS AT 860-365-0884.

## Reminder - Recommendations for Testing Residential Wells



At a minimum, test your well once each year for total coliform bacteria. Have a complete sanitary exam every 3 years and test for volatile organics every 5 years, if you have any buried oil or gas tanks in you area.



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