

HEALTH HAPPENINGS

A quarterly newsletter brought to you by Nashoba Associated Boards of Health

Serving the public health needs of Ashburnham, Ashby, Ayer, Berlin, Bolton, Boxborough, Devens, Dunstable, Groton, Harvard, Lancaster, Littleton, Lunenburg, Pepperell, Shirley, Stow, Townsend, and the community of Devens

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Issue: Winter (February) 2023

Winter 2023

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FEBRUARY IS



Happy New Year to Our Community!

Look at this beautiful female cardinal puffed up against the cold- photographed by our own Bridgette Braley, RS. It's still pretty dark and chilly out there, but there are signs of spring! We are glad to report that the case numbers for COVID, flu, and RSV are winding down across our region and the State, while norovirus and other GI illnesses persist, at rates we would expect to see this time of year. On a broader scale, the death rates from COVID-19 infection have fallen dramatically. Let's hear it for vaccines, and their role in saving lives throughout history!

We are gearing up for new programming and partnerships in the Spring– and we are developing new outreach strategies, too, for this post-pandemic, pre-endemic COVID world. (Are you sick of COVID yet?? We are, too!! If only it was sick of us...) Keep an eye out for us in your community– we have already “RSVP’d” for a few upcoming town events across the region, and we are so excited to see you out there!

Believe it or not, it's already time to talk about TICKS again! As a matter of fact, it's never NOT time to talk about ticks... they can be active anytime the temperature's above freezing. More on this in our Environmental Corner on Page 2!

*-Jenna Montgomery, LICSW
Communications Specialist @ Nashoba Associated Boards of Health*

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Agency Updates- Environmental Division:

The Nashoba Associated Boards of Health Environmental Division continues to work directly with the local elected Boards of Health and residents in our towns, enforcing State Sanitary and Environmental Codes, Massachusetts General Laws, and local regulations. We are preparing for our regional rabies clinics, offered in partnership with our local Boards of Health and participating veterinarians! More information on page 3.



Environmental Corner: Tick Talk

Who doesn't love a delicious poppy seed muffin? But wait—upon closer inspection, you may find a few unwelcome six-legged toppings on THIS particular muffin. 🐛

Ticks are tiny bugs that feed on the blood of animals. They live in shady, damp places, like brush, dead leaves, woods, and tall grass. Both adult and "nymph" (young) ticks can bite and spread disease.

It might make your skin crawl, but it's very important to know that the nymphs of some ticks are the size of a poppy seed, making them VERY tricky to spot! Full credit to the CDC for this unappetizing yet effective educational image.

Prevention Tips:

- Stay on main pathways and the center of trail when hiking
- Wear long sleeves, light colors, and pants tucked into socks
- Use insect repellents
- Check yourself, kids and pets for ticks daily.



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Agency Updates– Public Health Nursing Division:



Our public health nurses Tamara Bedard, RN, Maureen Scott, LPN, and Alicia Lepardo, RN have been hard at work keeping our communities healthy. They have continued to conduct communicable disease case investigation and follow up (including but not limited to COVID-19), home visits, collaboration with community colleagues, monthly well adult clinics in all of our communities, community programming such as Heart Health, and appearing at local events to educate the community about health, factors that influence it, and how to improve it. See February's Well Adult Clinic calendar on page 8, and check our website <https://www.nashoba.org/calendar> for the latest schedule!

Did you know you that if you live in a town in Nashoba's region, you can call to consult with our Public Health nurses regarding health-related concerns and resources during our business hours? Or, that if you reside in our region and you test positive for a communicable disease that's reportable under Massachusetts State law, one of our nurses may call you to conduct a case investigation? Visit the Public Health Nursing page on our website <https://www.nashoba.org/public-health> to learn more about all of the services offered.

Seasonal Illness Updates:

It seems we've finally turned a corner with flu, COVID, and RSV cases dropping in our region and also nationally. Norovirus (also nicknamed "the stomach flu") persists with outbreaks around the U.S., and case numbers at a seasonal high. Be sure to practice proper hand hygiene!



At this point, we all know how to protect ourselves from COVID-19 based on our own personal risk profiles. That said, below is a quick refresher on seven steps you can take to help slow the spread of COVID-19 and keep your community healthy:

Pro tip: some of these strategies work for other communicable diseases, too!

- ✓ Stay up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccines: mass.gov/covidvaccine
- ✓ Get tested if you have symptoms: mass.gov/GetTested
- ✓ Get treatment if needed: mass.gov/CovidTreatments
- ✓ Stay home when sick: mass.gov/isol8
- ✓ Mask up if you need to: mass.gov/MaskUpMA
- ✓ Enable MassNotify on your smartphone: mass.gov/MassNotify
- ✓ Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer

PET RABIES CLINIC



Our pet rabies immunization clinics are just around the corner! This year the clinics are scheduled between late Feb. and the end of April. We offer these in partnership with our local Boards of Health and participating veterinary practices in the region. The schedule is posted on our website Calendar page and flyers will be available soon! <https://www.nashoba.org/calendar>

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Agency Updates– Nashoba Nursing Service & Hospice:



Nashoba's **Home Health** division continues to offer high quality in-home care to help patients heal and regain their independence. We are excited to welcome Jennifer Raimon, LPN to our Homecare team! We are currently seeking candidates to fill the roles of Homecare RN Case Manager, Billing Specialist, and Per-diem Certified Nurse's Assistant/Home Health Aide. Thanks to generous donations from the Friends of Nashoba Nursing Service & Hospice non-profit, the Home Health division has been able to obtain new occupational therapy equipment for patients.

Nashoba's **Hospice** division continues to provide comprehensive, compassionate care for people with a life-limiting illness as well as their family and caregivers. We are proud members of the Pet Peace of Mind Program, which offers resources and supports that enable people to keep their pets at home with them during their end-of-life journey, and assists with re-homing a pet after a patient passes away. Our Hospice division offers regular grief support groups and grief socials for our patients and the community– more information on page 8. We are currently seeking a Hospice RN Case Manager– more information and application available at <https://www.nashoba.org/careers>.



Beating the Winter Blues

It's nice that the longest, darkest days of the season are behind us for now, right? If you still find yourself feeling a bit down and low energy, you might be experiencing "the winter blues." It's not uncommon for people to experience seasonal mood changes, and to experience a "lower" mood when the weather is colder and darker. Milder weather is coming, but there are still a few weeks of winter chill ahead of us. Fortunately, you can take care of yourself with these simple tips!

- **Getting enough sleep:** We say it all the time, but sleep is SO important for optimal physical, mental and emotional functioning.
- **Cutting back on social media:** Consider taking a break from socials (maybe even electronics in general, within reason) if you're feeling emotionally compromised. You may be surprised how much this is impacting your mental health.
- **Nourishing your body:** A healthy diet can improve and support optimal brain functioning. Omega-3 fatty acids seem to be of particular benefit. Stay hydrated and limit your caffeine and alcohol intake.
- **Moving your body (in ways that feel good to you):** Scientific evidence tells us that exercise is good for physical and mental health. Exercise helps your brain and body release chemicals to boost your mood and ease stress.
- **If you are experiencing a mental health crisis:** Help is available! If you are in Massachusetts, you can contact the MA Behavioral Health Help Line (BHHL) by calling or texting 833-773-2445. "The BHHL connects individuals and families to the full range of treatment services for mental health and substance use offered in Massachusetts, including outpatient, urgent, and immediate crisis care. Call for real-time support, initial clinical assessment, and connection to the right evaluation and treatment." - Mass. Dept. of Public Health. The BHHL is available 24/7, 365 days per year. You can learn more by visiting <https://www.mass.gov/emergencycrisis-services>. In addition, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is now the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, reachable by dialing 988, and is active across the United States.

These tips and more will also be included in Nashoba's column in the March edition of the Boxborough Bee.

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Community Partnership:



We continue to engage with our communities to both lead and support efforts to keep our residents healthy! Since our last newsletter, we have participated in a number of events throughout the region- read on for the highlights.

December 2022: Public Health Nurse Alicia spoke with teens at Ayer Library about wellness, self-care, stress management, relationships, and resilience. We attended a policy planning meeting with one of our region's community health network areas (CHNA), and the MA Public Health Association's Annual Conference. We worked with Lunenburg Public Access Media to record a presentation on common Winter Illnesses, which can be viewed at: <https://vimeo.com/785800643/8ad8648d35>

January 2023: Public Health Nurse Maureen provided a "Babysitting 101" presentation and discussion for Tweens at the Ayer Library. Jenna and Alicia, also from our Public Health Team, provided a presentation on Emergency Preparedness at the Trinity Chapel in Shirley. We began meeting with Harvard & Stow's Jail Diversion/co-response clinician from Advocates, who is working with these Police Departments on mental health-related needs and calls. We also began collaborating with Nashoba Valley Medical Center (NVMC) in Ayer on public health priorities in the region including stroke prevention and mental health, and are excited to be working on some events and initiatives with them.

February 2023: We introduced ourselves to Community Healthlink (CHL)'s new emergency services team and learned about their role as one of four Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs) serving our region. CBHCs are the State's new model to increase access to mental health care. We met with the leadership team at Nashoba Park Assisted Living in Ayer to see their beautiful, newly renovated space. We learned about the supports they offer to seniors in their living community and the exciting programming they are able to offer throughout the region, including Brain-Healthy Eating!

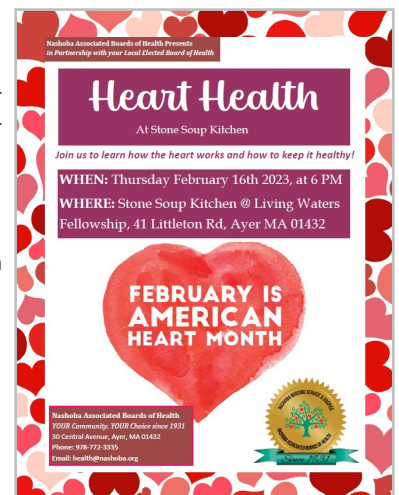
Upcoming Events:

Heart Health- Public Health Nurse Maureen will be offering this presentation at Stone Soup Kitchen in Ayer, MA on Thurs. Feb. 16th at 6 PM.

2023 Rabies Clinics- Held annually throughout the region, these will be taking place late Feb. through April this year. You can view the schedule on our "Calendar" page at <https://www.nashoba.org/calendar>.

Monthly Well Adult Clinics- Well Adult Clinics are held monthly in each of the towns in Nashoba's service region, but were on pause for the month of October due to our flu clinic schedule. Well Adult Clinics are an opportunity for adult residents to have a basic health screening and talk with their town nurse! See February's schedule on page 8.

For an up-to-date list of where we've been and will be in the region, please visit our News & Events page on the web at <https://www.nashoba.org/news-events>. You can also view archived versions of our newsletter while you're there!



Pictures top to bottom:

Public Health Nurse Alicia at our Shirley Emergency Preparedness Presentation, materials we handed out at the Shirley Emg. Prep. Presentation, and the flyer for our Stone Soup Heart Health talk.

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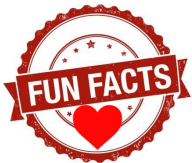
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Each year in February, we recognize American Heart Month, a time for us to consider our cardiovascular health and risk factors. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death worldwide, and our lifestyle can play a key role in our risk of developing cardiovascular disease. Over the next couple of pages, you'll learn more about this miraculous organ we all have, what exactly cardiovascular disease IS and how to live a "heart healthy" lifestyle!



- **Your heart beats about 100,000 times per day, and pumps 2,000 gallons of blood per day.**
- **Your "heart beat" is the sound of your heart valves opening and closing.**
- **Laughter is good for your heart! Your blood vessels relax when you laugh, and relaxed blood vessels mean your heart doesn't have to work as hard.**
- **Men and women can have different heart attack symptoms.**
- **The biggest artery in the human body (aorta) is as wide as a garden hose, while some capillaries are ten times thinner than a human hair.**

Facts Retrieved from <https://www.unitypoint.org/livewell/article.aspx?id=20b07ab0-e855-49c6-9ee2-91247e52d5cc>

Cardiovascular diseases are a group of blood and heart disorders that can lead to heart attack and stroke.



Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/infographics/noncommunicable-diseases/every-heart-counts.html>

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7 Strategies to Live a Heart-Healthy Lifestyle

When you choose healthy behaviors, you can lower your heart disease risk while also preventing other serious chronic conditions like type 2 diabetes and some kinds of cancer.



1

Learn Your Health History



2

Eat a Healthy Diet



3

Move More, Sit Less



4

Quit Smoking



5

Take Medicines As Directed



6

Choose Your Drinks Wisely



7 Monitor Your Blood Pressure at Home

Self-measured blood pressure monitors are easy and safe to use, and your doctor can show you how to use one if you need help.

Remember, you can visit your local public health nurse at our monthly Well Adult clinics for a screening!

- **Health History:** know your risks and talk to your family/doctor.
- **Diet:** Make healthy food choices like more fruits, veggies, whole grains, lean meats, and low-fat dairy products. Eat less salt, saturated fat, and added sugar.
- **Exercise:** Get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week, plus muscle strengthening activities at least 2 days per week.
- **Quit smoking:** Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for free help and take the first step on your journey to quit.
- **Take medicines as directed:** If you take medication for high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes, follow your doctor's instructions carefully. Always ask questions if you don't understand something. Never stop taking your medication without talking to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.
- **Choose your drinks wisely:** Substitute water for sugary drinks to reduce calories. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.

Images & Information retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/infographic/hearthealth.htm>

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Bereavement Groups, Grief Socials

Presented by Nashoba Nursing Service & Hospice

Please see our calendar at <https://www.nashoba.org/calendar> for the latest schedule.

Grief Support Groups: Conversation about Death & Grief

For more information, contact Lucia Camara at (978)425-6675

Townsend- First Wednesday of the Month— next is Mar. 1st, 4:00 PM; Townsend Senior Center, 16 Dudley Road, Townsend, MA

Shirley- Second Wednesday of the Month— next is Mar. 8th, 11:00 AM; Shirley Senior Center, 9 Parker Road, Shirley, MA

Lunenburg- Third Wednesday of the Month— next is Mar. 15th, 3:30 PM; Eagle House Senior Center, 25 Memorial Dr, Lunenburg, MA

Devens- Fourth Wednesday of the Month- next are Feb. 22nd and Mar. 22nd, 2:30 PM; Shirley Meadows Community Room 27 Hospital Road, Devens, MA

Grief Socials

A gentle opportunity to gather and meet with others who are grieving. Gentle and light conversation to help work through the grief, meet and hear how others are getting through their grief, and realizing there is no need to go this alone. Participate in the Grief Social that best suits your needs.

Locations and Times:

Townsend- Tuesdays: Mar. 7th, 11:30 AM- 1 PM at The Townsend House Restaurant, 2 Depot St in Townsend, MA

Shirley- Fridays: Feb. 17th and Mar. 17th, 4:30 PM to 6 PM at The Bull Run Restaurant, 215 Great Rd in Shirley, MA

Littleton- Tuesdays: Feb. 28th and Mar. 28th 11:30 AM to 1 PM at Il Forno Restaurant, 529 King St, Littleton, MA

To reserve your seat and make known you are attending, Be Sure to give Lucia a call at (978)425-6675

*Grief never ends
But it changes for it is a passage,
Not a Place to Stay.
Grief is not a sign of weakness,
Nor a lack of faith.....
It is the price of LOVE....*



February Well Adult Clinic Schedule

Well Adult Clinics are held monthly in each of the towns in the NABH region. Well Adult Clinics are an opportunity for adult residents to have a basic health screening and talk with their town's public health nurse for health tips and resources to promote their wellness!

Town	Clinic Location	Address	Day	Time
Ashburnham	Town Hall	32 Main St.	*Cancelled for February	*Will resume in March
Ashby	Town Hall, Land Use Room *new location	895 Main St.	Tues. 2/21 *new date	10-11
Ayer	Senior Center	18 Pond St.	2 nd Thursday	12:30-1:30
Berlin	Town Office Building-COA office, RM 118	23 Linden St.	1 st Thurs	10-11
Bolton	Bolton COA	600 Main St.	3 rd Thurs	10-11
Boxborough	Community Center	30 Middle Rd.	*Cancelled for February	*Will resume in March
Dunstable	Library	588 Main St.	4 th Wed	11-12
Groton	Senior Center	163 West Main St.	4 th Wed	1:30-2:30
Harvard	Hildreth House (COA)	13 Ayer Rd.	3 rd Tues	12:30-1:30
Lancaster	Community Center	695 Main St.	4 th Tues	12-1 * new time
Littleton	COA Room 230	33 Shattuck St.	2 nd Tues	10-11
Lunenburg	Eagle House	25 Memorial Dr.	4 th Thurs	9-11
Pepperell	Senior Center	37 Nashua Rd.	3 rd Wed	10-12
Shirley	Senior Center	9 Parker Rd.	2 nd Thurs	9:30-10:30
Stow	Senior Center	509 Great Rd.	1 st Wed	10-12
Townsend	Senior Center	16 Dudley Rd.	2 nd Wed	12-2

Please see our calendar at <https://www.nashoba.org/calendar> for the most up-to-date clinic schedule.

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