

NAUGATUCK VALLEY HEALTH DISTRICT May 2026



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



Earth Day at Ansonia Nature Center

On Saturday, April 18th, Health Educator, Lisa Trupp and Overdose Prevention Navigator, Austin Telford attended the Earth Day Celebration hosted by the Ansonia Nature Center. Lisa and Austin joined the thousands of attendees in the celebration, sharing information about climate change and conservation, as well as some great giveaways like environmentally safe medication disposal pouches, reusable utensils, biodegradable wildflower seed packets, frisbees, hot/cold packs and stress balls. NVHD would like to thank the Nature Center for inviting us to be part of this annual event once again this year!

Collaborative Health Fair in Ansonia

On Saturday, April 25th, Public Health Specialist, Vanessa Lopez and Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Emilija attended the 2nd Annual Collaborative Health Fair hosted by Life Health and Wellness Center, Inc., National Association of Hispanic Nurses, and Southern Connecticut State University at The Abundant Life Fellowship Ministries in Ansonia. The event provided the community with resources, health information, and various services, including screenings and food distribution. Additionally, children received bicycles and scooters, accompanied by safety education. We extend gratitude to the hosts and attendees!



Observances in May

- ALS Awareness Month
- Arthritis Awareness Month
- Better Sleep Month
- Healthy Vision Month
- Hepatitis Awareness Month
- Lupus Awareness Month
- Lyme Disease Awareness Month
- Melanoma And Skin Cancer Awareness Month
- Mental Health Awareness Month
- National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month
- National Celiac Disease Awareness Month
- National Nurse's Month
- National Osteoporosis Awareness Month
- National Stroke Awareness Month
- Women's Health Month

- World Hand Hygiene Day: May 5
- World Pulmonary Hypertension Day: May 5
- World Asthma Day: May 5
- National School Nurse Day: May 6
- World Maternal Mental Health Day: May 6
- Children's Mental Health Awareness Day: May 7
- HIV Vaccine and World AIDS Vaccine Day: May 18
- World Autoimmune/Auto-Inflammatory Arthritis Day: May 19
- National Senior Health and Fitness Day: May 27
- World No Tobacco Day: May 31
- National Air Quality Awareness Week: May 4-8
- National Nurse's Week: May 6 - 12
- Food Allergy Awareness Week: May 10 - 16
- National Women's Health Week: May 10 - 16
- Maternal Sepsis Week: May 10 - 16

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Every year during National Public Health Week, the first week of April, NVHD employees anonymously submit nominations to recognize a stand out employee. We are proud to announce that the **2026 Naugatuck Valley Health District Distinguished Service Award** was presented to Carissa Caserta, MPH, Assistant Director of Community Health Services, in recognition of her exceptional dedication, loyalty, and commitment to the community and Health District. Her positivity is contagious and uplifting!

Congratulations, Carissa!

We celebrated **Administrative Professionals Day** on April 22, 2026!

An Administrative Assistant in a local health department/district (LHD) like NVHD is essential to keeping daily operations running smoothly. They provide frontline support across programs, staff, and the public—often serving as the first point of contact for the community. Administrative Assistants are the operational backbone of a local health department, ensuring that services are accessible, records are accurate, and staff can function efficiently. Their role directly impacts both internal workflow and the public’s experience with health services.

A Business Manager in a local health district (LHD) like NVHD is responsible for backend operations like finance, procurement, and human resources (HR). The Business Manager is the financial and workforce architect of a local health department, ensuring that resources, people, and systems are aligned to deliver essential public health services effectively and sustainably. From coordinating payroll processing and employee benefits to managing liability, insurance, and risk mitigation strategies, this role is critical for sustaining public health services and enabling program success.

THANK YOU JUDI, ROSE, & LAURIE!



Pictured from left to right are Judi Waleski, Administrative Assistant, Laurie Veillette, Business Manager, and Rose Carey, Administrative Assistant.



Congratulations to Amanda Ruchin, Registered Sanitarian, on the birth of her daughter Raelynn Shea Ruchin born April 3, 2026. We wish Amanda and her family joy and happiness during this special time!



Join us in welcoming Alicia Mulvihill, MPH! Ali joined NVHD as its new Senior Public Health Specialist on April 27, 2026!



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Training, Exercises, and Conferences



FDA Outbreak Response Training

Amy Durand, Registered Sanitarian, and Kristie D'Averso, Registered Nurse, attended a U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) Outbreak Response Training on April 15, 2026, at the West Hartford Town Hall. Thank you to our colleagues at the West Hartford-Bloomfield Health District for coordinating this important training so that our workforce has increased readiness for responding to and investigating foodborne illness outbreaks.

Hoarding Response Training

Vanessa Lopez, MPH, CCHW, Public Health Specialist, and Amy Durand, MPH, Registered Sanitarian, attended a multi-disciplinary training on the nature and treatment of hoarding, with particular attention to practical, team-based intervention strategies presented by Dr. David Tolin, Founder and Director of the Anxiety Disorders Center.

The training was coordinated by Jessica Bloomberg, LCSW of Fairfield Police Department and was held on April 17, 2026 at the Penfield Pavilion in Fairfield.



Emergency Management Symposium

NVHD's Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Medical Reserve Corps Coordinator Emilija Griceviciute, MPH joined hundreds of emergency management, public safety, and public health professionals at the 2026 CT Emergency Management Symposium on April 23rd at Camp Nett hosted by CCM in partnership with the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS), the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), and the Department of Public Health (DPH).



Biological Incident Series Training 100: Tabletop Exercise

Naugatuck Valley Health District recently hosted a regional tabletop exercise, which is a discussion-based training to improve readiness and response for certain emergency or crisis situations. This particular exercise tested plans for responding to an anthrax exposure event. The CT Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) Region 5 exercise took place during National Public Health Week in the first week of April. Thanks to our local, state, and federal partners who attended and participated. There is information on the next page about how you can participate in our upcoming mass dispensing exercise!



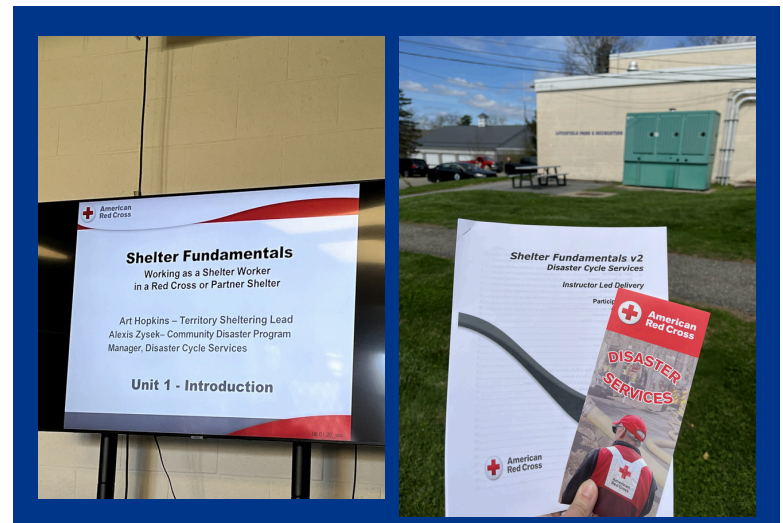
2026 Connecticut Healthcare Coalition Conference

On April 28th, Preparedness Coordinator, Emilija Griceviciute, and Director Jess Kristy attended the 2026 Connecticut Healthcare Coalition Conference which had the theme: One Voice, Many Partners: Strengthening Communication in Preparedness and Times of Crisis. The conference included educational sessions, a communications tabletop exercise, and networking opportunities focused on emergency preparedness and response coordination. Director Jessica Kristy, MPH is proud to serve as an Executive Committee member of the CT HCC.



Red Cross Shelter Fundamentals Training

Cross training with different partner agencies, like the American Red Cross, is extremely important in public health pre-disaster, during response, and for community recovery. Thank you to our Region 5 Red Cross Coordinator Alexis and to the Litchfield CERT for hosting this insightful training on April 18th at the Litchfield Emergency Operations Center in Bantam.





Naugatuck Valley Health District recently hosted the CT DEMHS Region 5 Unit Leaders from the Danbury Medical Reserve Corps, Housatonic Valley Medical Reserve Corps, Torrington Area Medical Reserve Corps, and Naugatuck Valley Medical Reserve Corps to participate in a strategic planning workshop as part of a statewide project being facilitated by the Capitol Region MRC, with funding from the CT Health Care Coalition.

WHAT IS THE MRC?

The MRC is a national network of volunteers that began in 2002. MRC units are community based and function as a way to locally organize and utilize volunteers who want to donate their time and expertise to prepare for and respond to emergencies, while promoting safety among their communities. All active members are protected from liability while working or training with the NVMRC. Volunteers must be 18 years or older.

No prior experience is needed! We are currently recruiting individuals with both non-medical and medical backgrounds!

We have a great training opportunity coming up on Friday, June 26 at Naugatuck High School. Learn how community members and organizations can help support an operation if the health department should need to distribute medicine following an exposure event.

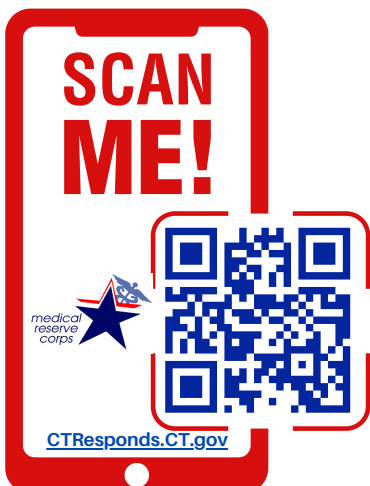
Participants must register ahead of time at www.surveymonkey.com/r/R5-Bio200.



BIO 200 TRAINING

- ✓ Functional Exercise
- ✓ Point of Dispensing Operations
- ✓ Medical Countermeasures
- ✓ Strengthen Regional Preparedness
- ✓ Satisfies PHEP Deliverable

Friday, June 26, 2026
8am-12pm
Naugatuck High School
543 Rubber Ave, Naugatuck, CT 06770



Contact: Emilija Griceviciute
Email: egriceviciute@nvhd.org
Phone: 203-881-3255 ext. 122



REGISTRATION REQUIRED

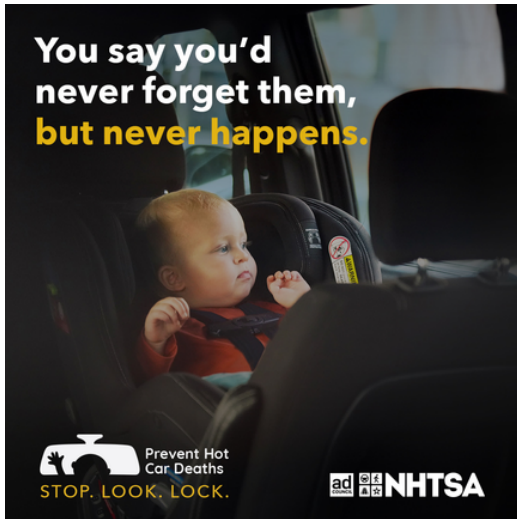
www.surveymonkey.com/r/R5-Bio200

MAY 18 - 22, 2026

HEAT SAFETY WEEK

Heat-related illnesses happen when the body is not able to properly cool itself. While the body normally cools itself by sweating, during extreme heat, this might not be enough. In these cases, a person's body temperature rises faster than it can cool itself down. This can cause damage to the brain and other vital organs.

Make it a habit to check your entire vehicle – especially the back seat – before locking the doors and walking away.



2026 Heat Safety Week

The National Integrated Heat Health Information System (NIHHIS) is hosting a heat safety social media week from May 18-22 to raise awareness about heat risk and safety. Throughout the week, NIHHIS will share content according to these themes.

Follow along by sharing NIHHIS posts and adding your own content with #HeatSafety. Encourage others in your community to help spread the word about heat!

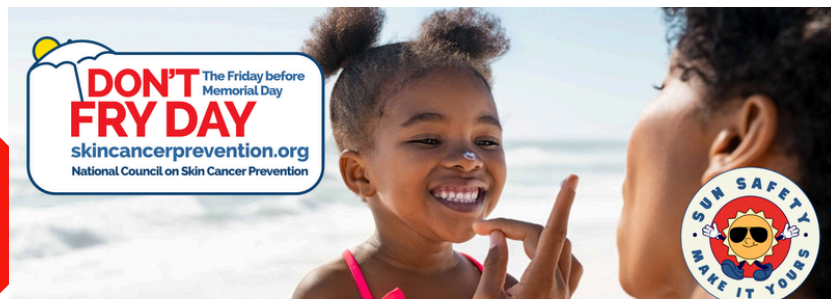
#HeatSafety

- 5/18 What is Heat-related Illness?
- 5/19 Heat Safety Tips
- 5/20 Check on Family, Friends, Teammates, & Colleagues
- 5/21 Outdoor Recreation & Heat Safety
- 5/22 Stay Safe in the Sun (Don't Fry Day)

Heat Exhaustion	Heat Stroke
<p>ACT FAST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move to a cooler area Loosen clothing Sip cool water Seek medical help if symptoms don't improve 	<p>ACT FAST</p> <p>CALL 911</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move person to a cooler area Loosen clothing and remove extra layers Cool with water or ice
<p>Dizziness</p> <p>Thirst</p> <p>Heavy Sweating</p> <p>Nausea</p> <p>Weakness</p>	<p>Confusion</p> <p>Dizziness</p> <p>Becomes Unconscious</p>
<p><i>Heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke.</i></p>	<p><i>Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not given.</i></p>
	<p>Stay Cool, Stay Hydrated, Stay Informed!</p>

Skin cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in the US

1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime



Outdoor workers have a 60% greater risk of developing skin cancer

9 out of 10 skin cancers are caused by overexposure to UV radiation

The National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention designates the Friday before Memorial Day as "Don't Fry Day" to promote skin cancer awareness and encourage everyone to protect their skin while enjoying the outdoors.

Make sunscreen part of your daily routine:

- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with Sun Protection Factor (SPF) 30 or higher for protection from UVA and UVB radiation
- Apply 30 minutes before going outdoors
- Reapply every two hours or more frequently if sweating or in water

Make sunscreen part of your daily routine:

- Stay out of the sun between 10am - 4pm when the sun's rays are the strongest
- Seek shade when possible
- Use extra caution near water, snow, sand, and other reflective surfaces
- Check the UV index before heading outside and protect your skin accordingly

Wear protective clothing:

- A wide-brimmed hat
- Sunglasses with a UV protective coating to protect your eyes and the surrounding skin
- Long-sleeved shirt and pants with a dense weave or built in UPF
- Closed-toe shoes and socks that cover the ankle

Do not burn or tan:

- Never tan intentionally
- Do not use tanning beds
- Ultraviolet light from the sun and tanning beds causes skin cancer and premature aging



Lyme Disease Awareness Month

What Is Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection primarily transmitted by Ixodes ticks, also known as deer ticks or blacklegged ticks. These tiny arachnids are typically found in wooded and grassy areas. Although people may think of Lyme as an East Coast disease, it is found throughout the United States, as well as in more than sixty other countries.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that 476,000 people are diagnosed with Lyme disease in the US every year. However, because diagnosing Lyme can be difficult, many people who actually have Lyme may be misdiagnosed with other conditions. Many experts believe the true number of cases is much higher.

Lyme disease affects people of all ages. The CDC notes that it is most common in children, older adults, and others such as firefighters and park rangers who spend time in outdoor activities and have higher exposure to ticks.

Check for symptoms at [Lymedisease.org](https://www.lymedisease.org) here



or scan

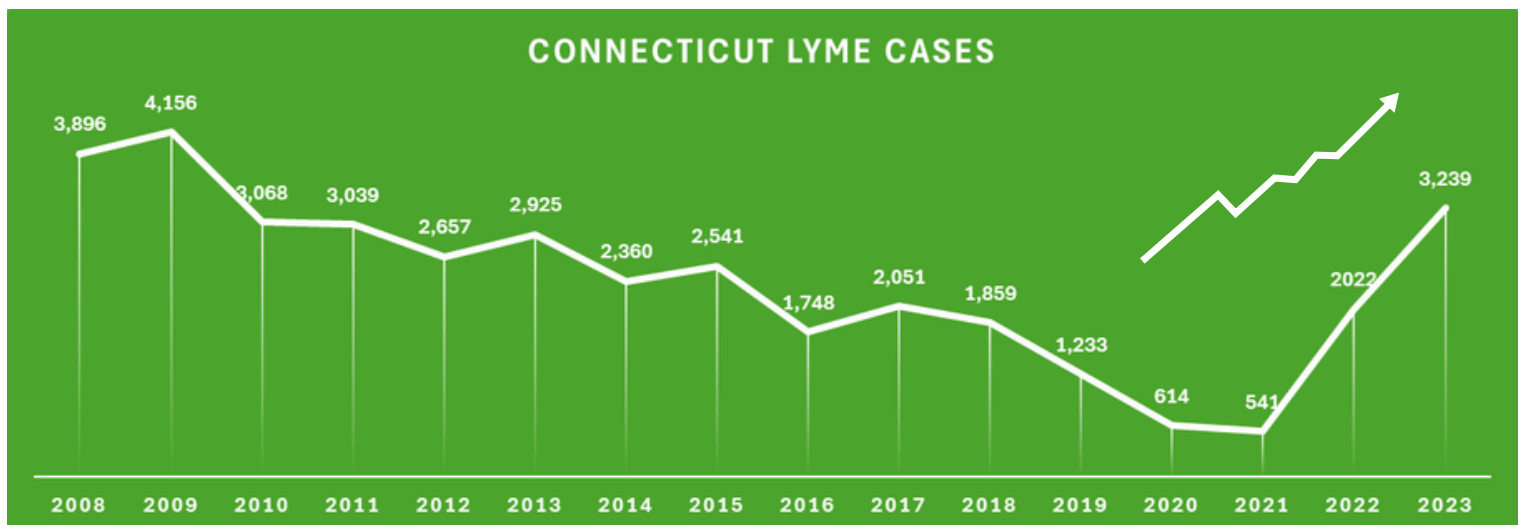


Lyme prevalence in the US
CDC.org



Lyme Disease is particularly prevalent in the northeastern U.S., with Connecticut among the top five highest states.

The chart below represents Lyme Disease cases in Connecticut from 2008 to 2023. While cases fell off during the COVID pandemic, this graphics shows an increase to nearly the highest levels since 2009. The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station recently released data that shows 50% of ticks tested in Connecticut came back positive for Lyme in 2025, with 2026 off to a record number of tick submissions for this early in the season.



Follow along to the the next page to learn more about ticks and tick bite prevention



BE TICK SMART



REPEL ~ INSPECT ~ REMOVE

TICK PREVENTION TIPS

- Use EPA-registered insect repellent & follow the label.
- Wear light colors, long sleeves, pants, tall socks, boots, and a hat.
- Stick to the center of trails. Avoid brush, tall grass, & leaf litter.
- After you get home, conduct a full-body tick check on yourself, children, & pets.

HOW TO REMOVE A TICK

- Use clean, fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface & pull upward.
- Clean the bite area with soap and water or rubbing alcohol.



CT Data in 2025

The chart below represents the infection percent by infection type for deer ticks tested in CT in 2025. The highest percent of infection was *B. burgdorferi*, or the primary cause of Lyme Disease.

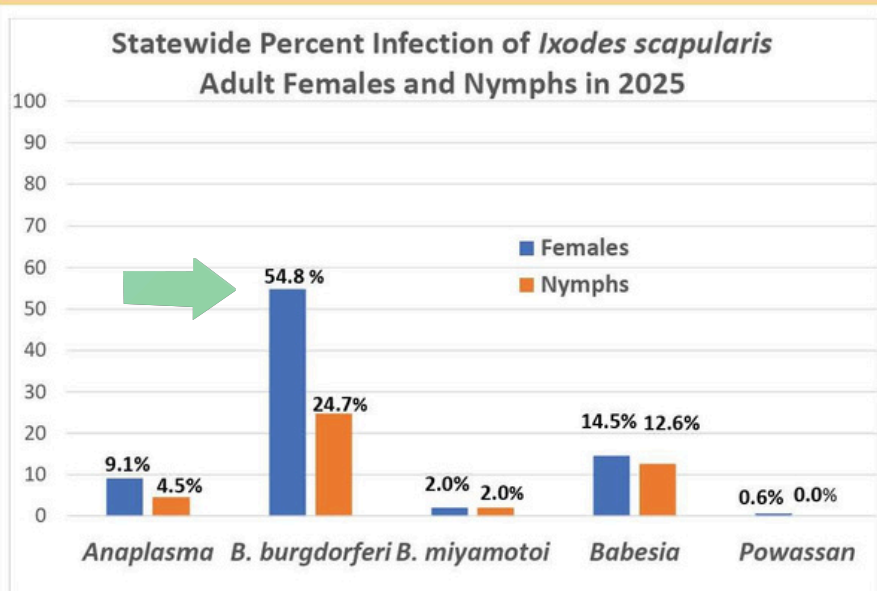


Figure 1: 2025 Statewide Percent Infection Rates for Adult females and Nymphs

COMMON TICK SPECIES IN CONNECTICUT



Blacklegged Tick

AKA Deer Tick

reddish-brown body, dark brown/black spot on upper back.

- Active year-long & commonly found in fields, forests, and leaf litter.
- Known for majority of human Lyme diseases but must be attached for 36 - 48 hours or more to transmit Lyme Disease.



American Dog Tick

AKA Wood Tick

brown with white/gray markings.

- Peak season in CT is April - August.
- Commonly found in tall grass, fields, meadows, trails, and borders of streams, and wooded swamps.
- Known vector for Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RRMSF) and Tularemia.



Lone Star Tick

Reddish-brown bodies with a single white spot on their back.

- Has established populations in New Haven County & peak season is April - August.
- Commonly found in the shade, grass or at the tips of low lying branches. They can be encountered in large numbers leading to multiple tick bites.

Air Quality Awareness Week 2026



Air Quality & Climate Children's Books Donations by NVHD

As part of our commitment to promoting public health, improving community well-being, and providing environmental health education, the Naugatuck Valley Health District (NVHD) is pleased to announce our donation of air quality awareness related children's books to all local public libraries across the Valley in recognition of **Air Quality Awareness Week (May 4-8, 2026), Earth Week (April 18-24, 2026), and National Library Week (April 19-25, 2026).**

We believe that providing these resources will help educate children and families about the importance of clean air, encourage environmental awareness, and promote healthier communities.

This donation is part of a broader Valley-wide initiative by NVHD to increase access to youth friendly environmental health education materials. Through this effort, we aim to raise awareness about air quality and its impact, particularly for individuals with asthma and other respiratory conditions.

Visit any of our wonderful Valley public libraries and check out one of these books!

Ansonia Public Library

53 S Cliff St, Ansonia, CT 06401
www.ansonialibrary.org

Derby Neck Library

307 Hawthorne Ave, Derby, CT 06418
www.derbynecklibrary.org

Seymour Public Library

346 Church St, Seymour, CT 06483
www.seymourpubliclibrary.org

Huntington Branch Library

41 Church St, Shelton, CT 06484
sheltonlibrarysystem.org

Beacon Falls Public Library

10 Maple Ave, Beacon Falls, CT 06403
www.beaconfallslibrary.org

Derby Public Library

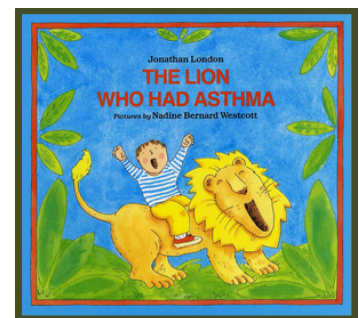
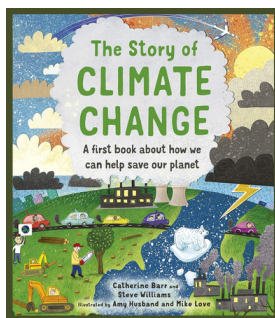
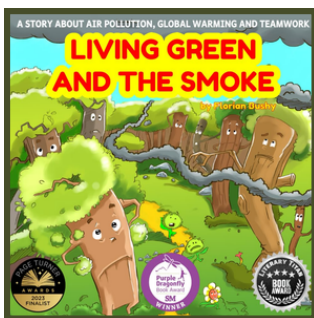
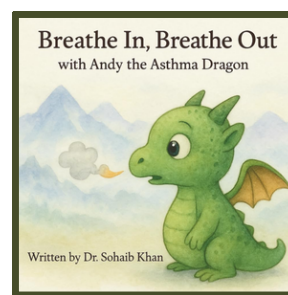
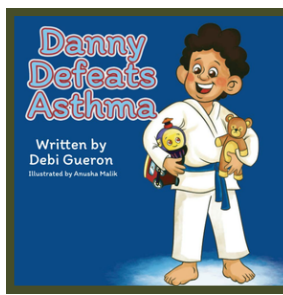
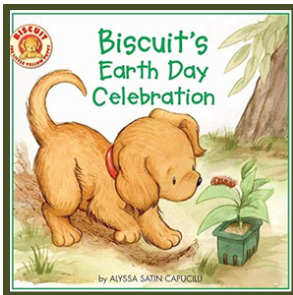
313 Elizabeth St, Derby, CT 06418
www.derbypubliclibrary.org

Howard Whittemore Memorial Library

243 Church St, Naugatuck, CT 06770
whittemorelibrary.org

Plumb Memorial Library

65 Wooster St, Shelton, CT 06484
sheltonlibrarysystem.org



This initiative is made possible through our Air Quality Monitoring for Communities grant funding from the Environmental Protection Agency in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Public Health's Office of Climate and Health.

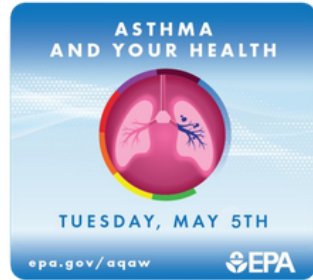
Air Quality Awareness Week 2026



Learn more information about the topics below by clicking the icon or hyperlink.



<https://www.epa.gov/air-quality/wildland-fires-and-smoke>



<https://www.epa.gov/air-quality/asthma-and-your-health>



<https://www.epa.gov/air-quality/indoor-air-quality>



<https://www.epa.gov/air-quality/air-animals-and-plants>



When the AQI is green, the air is clean!

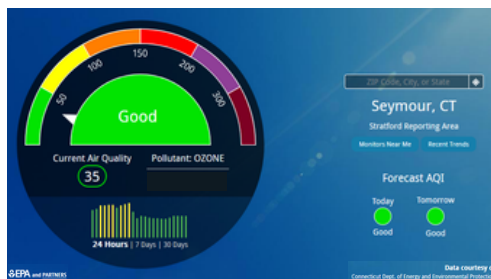
The EPA and other environmental agencies measure pollution in the air. Then they use the Air Quality Index, or AQI, to tell the people about the air. An index can be a quick way to tell people how good or bad something is. The AQI uses colors, and numbers, and words to tell you about the air.

AQI Basics for Ozone and Particle Pollution			
Daily AQI Color	Levels of Concern	Values of Index	Description of Air Quality
Green	Good	0 to 50	Air quality is satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
Yellow	Moderate	51 to 100	Air quality is acceptable. However, there may be a risk for some people, particularly those who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Orange	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101 to 150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is less likely to be affected.
Red	Unhealthy	151 to 200	Some members of the general public may experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Purple	Very Unhealthy	201 to 300	Health alert: The risk of health effects is increased for everyone.
Maroon	Hazardous	301 and higher	Health warning of emergency conditions: everyone is more likely to be affected.

Public Air Quality Dashboards with Real Time Data



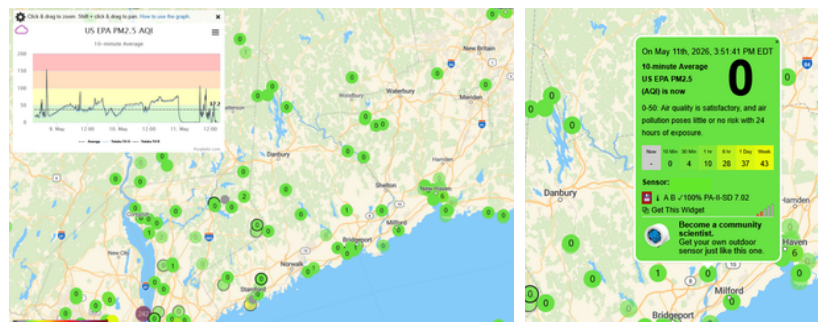
For Ozone and Particulate Matter (PM2.5 and PM10), go to <http://airnow.gov> or the AirNow app, search your location, then click a colored circle on the map to learn more.



For Fire and Smoke Map, go to <http://fire.airnow.gov> or the AirNow app, search your location, then click a colored circle on the map to learn more.



For Particulate Matter (PM2.5), go to <https://map.purpleair.com/>, search your location, then click a colored circle on the map to learn more.



ANSONIA, DERBY SEYMOUR & SHELTON



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Naugatuck Valley Health District



HELP OUR RESEARCH & HOST A FREE AIR QUALITY SENSOR!

Naugatuck Valley Health District (NVHD) invites local businesses, public buildings, community organizations, and residents in Ansonia, Derby, Seymour and Shelton to participate in an exciting community science initiative: the NVHD Air Quality Monitoring Program!

Selected host sites will receive a PurpleState Air Quality Sensor, including the power source and SD data microchip, with a total value of \$359. These devices are provided completely free of charge to participating locations through federal grant funding. The devices will be installed by a project partner.

PurpleAir sensors measure particulate matter (PM). The sensors will relay data in real time to a publicly available online dashboard, the PurpleAir Real-Time Map, which is accessible on any smart device or web browser.

How Much Power Does a PurpleAir Sensor Draw?
About 1 watt. For context, one LED lightbulb draws ten times as much energy. A phone charger plugged-in but left idle/not charging anything draws approximately 2-5 watts.

By volunteering as a host site, you will help:

- Expand local air quality monitoring in the Naugatuck Valley
- Support public health research and environmental awareness
- Provide valuable real-time data to residents, researchers, and public health officials
- Contribute to improved understanding of environmental factors that impact respiratory health, including asthma
- Community participation is essential to building a reliable and representative air monitoring network that benefits all residents of Ansonia and Derby

Upon completion of 1-year of data collection, residential host sites will be eligible to receive a one-time \$120.00 Visa gift card as appreciation for their participation.

For more information, please contact John Mucha, MPH, RS, Head Sanitarian jmuch@nvhd.org or 203-881-3255 x 112

SIGN UP HERE!
<https://bit.ly/ValleyAirSensor>



“The PurpleAir Flex is perfect for residential, commercial, or industrial users looking to collect real-time PM2.5 data from a tough, inconspicuous sensor. Connect it to WiFi to view that data on the PurpleAir Real-Time Map. An LED displays AQI information at a glance, and a modular design provides easy access to internals.”
- PurpleAir.com



- Measures PM2.5
- Temperature, Humidity & Pressure Sensor
- VOC Sensor
- Connects To Real-Time Map
- Weather Resistant
- SD Card Logger
- Dual Particle Counters

Action saves lives



World Hand Hygiene Day 2026

SAVE LIVES
Clean Your Hands

Why is World Hand Hygiene Day important?

Hand hygiene is one of the most effective measures to prevent the spread of infections, including those caused by antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Proper hand hygiene practices can significantly reduce healthcare-associated infections, protecting both patients and healthcare workers.

Moreover, promoting hand hygiene contributes to broader public health goals, such as combating antimicrobial resistance and improving overall healthcare quality. By raising awareness and encouraging proper hand hygiene practices, World Hand Hygiene Day plays a vital role in safeguarding health and saving lives.

May 5th

World Hand Hygiene Day

https://bit.ly/CDC_HandwashVideo



U.S. CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

Visit NVHD's YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@naugatuckvalleyhd/shorts>) to watch a demonstration of the importance of thoroughly washing our hands in order to get rid of all the germs.



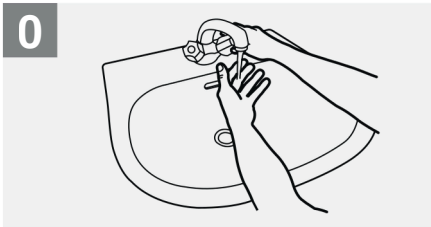
<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/7zK7pzuhBoo>



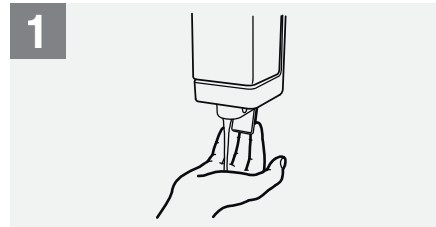
How to Handwash?



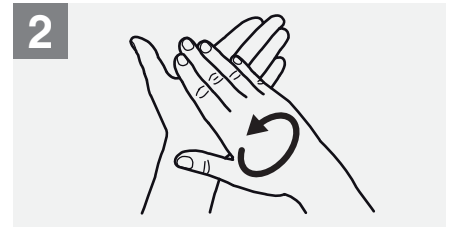
Duration of the entire procedure: 40-60 seconds



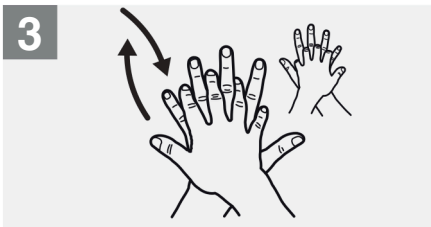
0 *Wet hands with water;*



1 *Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces;*



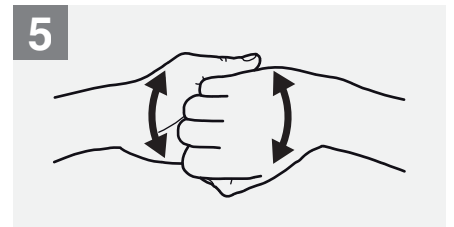
2 *Rub hands palm to palm;*



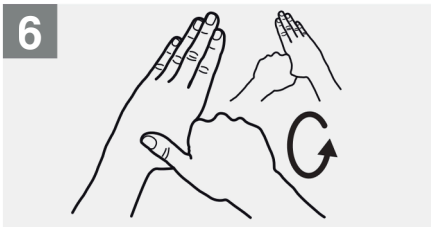
3 *Right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa;*



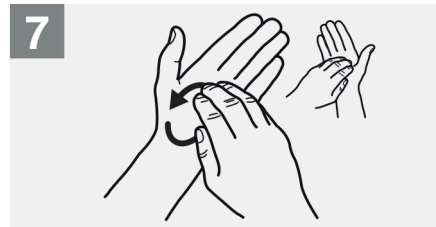
4 *Palm to palm with fingers interlaced;*



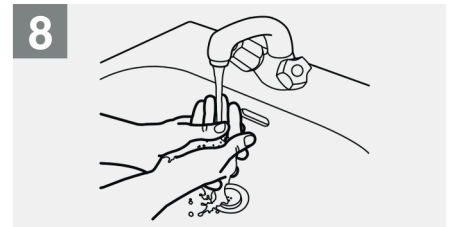
5 *Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked;*



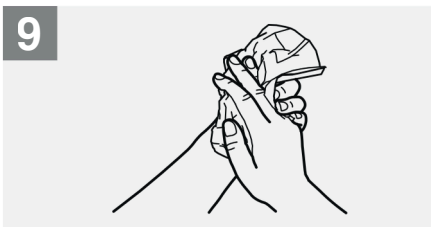
6 *Rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa;*



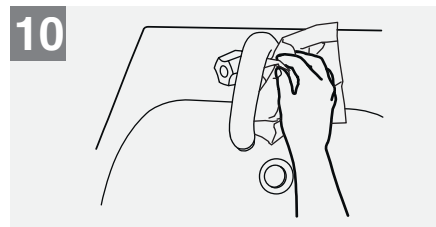
7 *Rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa;*



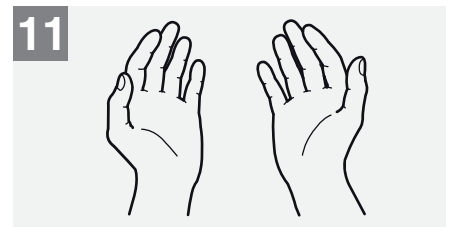
8 *Rinse hands with water;*



9 *Dry hands thoroughly with a single use towel;*



10 *Use towel to turn off faucet;*



11 *Your hands are now safe.*

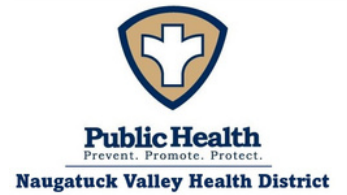


World Health Organization

Patient Safety

A World Alliance for Safer Health Care

SAVE LIVES
Clean Your Hands



You're invited! Join one of our committees!

Here are some examples of what is included in our proposed work plan

Improve Access to Care and Other Social Needs

- Expand access to primary & specialty care
- Explore Mobile Integrated Healthcare with local EMS providers and other community based organizations
- Reduce transportation barriers
- Strengthen referral pathways between healthcare and social service providers via the Valley Council for Health & Human Services Community Care Hub & UniteUs participation

Interested in learning more? Contact Co-Chair Myra Odenwaelder at MOdenwaelder@Griffinhealth.org

Enhance Mental and Behavioral Health

- Increase awareness and access to mental and behavioral health programs
- Develop a Regional Suicide Postvention Plan
- Improve mental and behavioral health referrals and tracking
- Improve local mental and behavioral health data sharing

Interested in learning more? Contact Co-Chair Lisa Trupp at ltrupp@nvhd.org

Improve Awareness, Access to, and Uptake of Healthy Food and Nutrition Programming and Services

- Promote coordination and system-level support for food and nutrition equity
- Ensure that nutrition assistance eligible households in the Valley are aware of and participating in state and community-driven nutrition programs to reduce food insecurity
- Utilize Griffin Hospital's Center for Healthy Living and Teaching Kitchen to increase community nutrition education programs, events, and offerings
- Reduce food waste in public cafeterias and promote sustainable food habits
- Conduct a feasibility study of establishing a food co-op or hub designed to increase access to healthy and affordable foods for all Valley residents while supporting the local agricultural community

Interested in learning more? Contact Co-Chair Jessica Kristy at jkristy@nvhd.org

No experience is needed!

To maximize resources, reduce redundant work, and to set meaningful goals and realistic work plan objectives over the next three years, we need help from the whole community! Whether you live, work, or play in the Valley, your voice matters. With ongoing open recruitment, we encourage you to participate from the beginning stages of finalizing our work plan through the implementation phase!

The committees are led by members of the Valley CHIP Steering Committee and representatives of Naugatuck Valley Health District, Griffin Health, and the Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center. We will provide you the data and background information you need!

If you need immediate assistance, please call or text

The Naugatuck Valley Health District understands that mental health is an important part of the health of an individual as a whole.



May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Naugatuck Valley Health District joins Mental Health America this May in celebrating Mental Health Awareness Month.

The theme this year is “More Good Days Together”, placing the focus on maintaining your mental health through self-care and proactive measures to have “more good days”.

Take ✨
Care of
Your Mind



YOU ARE
NOT ALONE

Please take some time to review the next few pages to learn some tips to help you have “more good days”

Click the logo or scan the QR Code to learn about the 2026 theme from Mental Health America



<https://mhanational.org/mental-health-month/>



2-1-1 counts

Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, Naugatuck, Seymour, Shelton

January 1, 2026 - April 30, 2026

<https://ct.211counts.org/>



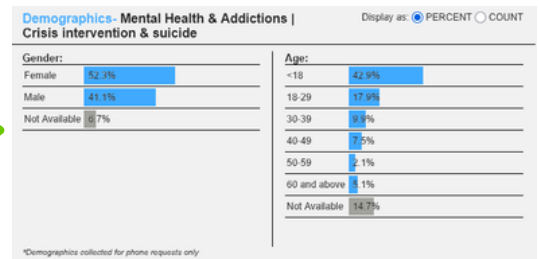
21.2%

of all Valley resident calls made to 2-1-1 between January 1 - April 30, 2026 were related to Mental Health. The 678 calls were related to direct help or help directing to crisis intervention and suicide hotlines; substance use and addiction resources; and mental health facilities and services.

TOP MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTIONS REQUESTS	UNMET ⓘ
Substance abuse & addictions 82	12%
Marriage & family 0	0%
Crisis intervention & suicide 375	8%
Mental health services 219	4%
Mental health facilities 2	0%
Other mental health & addictions 0	0%

0 = No requests made
Not Available = Data not collected
Some requests are only computed at the category level

Requests >100 AND > 50%



What's your story?

Every story shared turns silence into

CONNECTION.

This is **Mental Health Awareness Month.**

When we focus on the person and not the diagnosis, we create more supportive conversations about mental health. Language matters. Choosing supportive words can help people feel seen, heard, and respected.

Mental health is essential to a person's life in the same way as physical health. Hesitation to talk about mental health adds to the notion that the topic is taboo. It is important to normalize conversations surrounding mental health so people can feel empowered to seek the help they need.

Resources are available to help you feel more informed to talk about mental health with the people in your life who may need your support.

For more information and resources, visit:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/what-is-mental-health/how-to-talk>

- For people with Mental Health Problems
- For Young People Looking for Help
- For Parents and Caregivers
- For Friends and Family Members
- For Educators
- For Community and Faith Leaders



AFFIRMATIONS FOR MORE GOOD DAYS AND WHY THEY WORK

Affirmations are statements you say or think to yourself that reinforce what matters to you and who you want to be. They remind you that you are strong and help you focus on your values and on what makes you feel calm and confident.

Affirmations aren't just about positive thinking. They help your brain focus on what matters most, so stress feels less overwhelming, and you become more resilient over time. Studies on affirmations have found that they can improve people's overall well-being, help them feel better about themselves, and reduce anxiety. On top of that, the effects of affirmations are immediate and long-lasting. Try some of the affirmations below to support more good days and get through the hard ones.

I am capable of finding a community that protects, affirms, and celebrates me. I will not allow past experiences to block me from the connection that I deserve.

My feelings are designed to communicate needs that I may not notice otherwise. I can reflect on them with curiosity instead of shame and discover new pathways to brighter days.

I have the power to practice daily routines that nourish my physical and mental health. As I do so, I won't forget that rest, connection, and stillness are pivotal pieces of those routines. .

My creativity is fueled by rest and connectedness. I have the capacity to surprise myself, and my imagination deserves space to play.

When I slow down and take notice, I am inspired by my resilience, strength, and intelligence.

I give myself permission to experience the best things about today in a present and grounded body.

I trust my inner wisdom to lead my decisions today.

I will continue to imagine a world where my needs and wants are a priority. I refuse to shrink myself because living an authentic life is a gift to myself and others.

I am committed to discovering or creating spaces that honor every aspect of me. I deserve to bask in the joy of being seen, affirmed, and loved fully.

If having good days feels hard, know that help is available and that you are not alone. Check on your mental health with a free, quick, anonymous test at mhascreening.org.

Explore additional resources and tools for more good days at mhanational.org/may.

JOURNAL PROMPTS FOR MORE GOOD DAYS

Journaling helps us process our experiences and recognize the good in everyday life that we often overlook. Beyond the emotional benefits, the physical act of writing is good for your brain and supports learning and memory. Use the journal prompts below to reflect on thoughts and emotions as you work toward more good days.

Make a "good day" list. List 15 things that would make tomorrow a good day for you. Don't limit yourself, and don't be afraid to embrace the simple things and/or dream big. Then, choose 3 things from the list and think about how you can make them a reality. Is there a goal that you could start on today to make any of them possible for your future self?

Staying hopeful during difficult times can feel impossible. Think of a time in the past when hope helped you to overcome a fear, hardship, or challenge. What motivated you to keep going? How does hope show up in your body, interactions with others, and actions? Is there a tiny spark of hope that you would like to celebrate today?

Asking for help takes courage. What would you tell someone who was struggling to reach out during their time of need? Is there any part of this message that you need to hold on to for yourself?

Good days can be created through a combination of healthy choices, moment by moment. What helps you to make the best decisions for yourself throughout the day? How could your sleep schedule, healthy relationships, and physical movement create an opportunity for a brighter day?

Choose 10 things you can hear, smell, see, or feel in your surroundings. For each one, think of one thing you are grateful for. For example, "I am grateful to the bees for creating the honey in my tea," or "I'm thankful for the garbage truck driver for keeping our community clean."

Name one small action that a friend, loved one, or community member has taken to brighten your day recently. Why was it special to you?

Mindfulness and moments of stillness can improve focus and shift our perspective. What is one small way that you can create space for yourself, your family, friends, colleagues, or community to take a brain break today?

Starting from the top of your head and going down to the tip of your toes, think about how feelings like excitement, confidence, and calm show up in your body. Can you list 5 sensations that surprised you?

Write a letter to your future self, thanking them for getting you to a new day, month, or year. Celebrate the resilience that you believe you will notice in yourself. What things do you believe you will overcome between now and then? What do you believe you would need to hear to keep going?

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MOVEMENT FOR MENTAL HEALTH: WHY IT DOESN'T HAVE TO LOOK LIKE EXERCISE

Movement is an important tool for supporting well-being, but sometimes it can be hard to get going. Importantly, movement doesn't have to mean exercise, and it doesn't have to be all-or-nothing! Finding ways to move that you enjoy, even if they feel small, can make a big difference in supporting both your mental and physical health.

Overcoming the mental block to movement

It's no secret that moving your body is good for your mental health. Movement offers proven benefits, including feeling calm, reducing stress, boosting mood and connection with others, helping with pain, and fostering inspiration and creativity. So why don't people do it more? When most people think of "movement," thoughts of running or going to the gym are the first things that come to mind. Those things can feel overwhelming to fit into busy schedules or to do if you aren't used to exercising.

Sometimes, a mental block can make it difficult to get moving. This can be especially true when you are living with a mental health condition like depression, where symptoms like brain fog or anhedonia can make it harder to feel motivated. Dealing with mental blocks is hard, but it is possible to overcome them.

It can help to think about how you will feel after you move or how you've felt in the past after movement. This can help you push through the block and get started.

Remember that movement doesn't have to look a certain way, and what works for one person may not work for another. It is important to explore which forms of movement feel good to you and best fit your unique needs and circumstances.

Celebrating the ways you already move

When considering movement for well-being, it's worth celebrating the physical activity that is already part of your routine. You may be surprised to learn that you are more active than you realize.

Every bit of movement you do counts! Normal things like standing or walking during a work shift, carrying a baby or toddler, or using the stairs instead of the elevator are all forms of movement. You probably also don't give yourself credit for how many times you lift 10-15 pounds while carrying groceries, taking out the trash, or bringing laundry up and down the stairs.

You can support your current movement habits by drinking water throughout the day, using a pedometer on your phone, watch, or an app to track your steps, or wearing comfortable shoes.

Celebrating what you already do helps support a healthy perspective and mindset. As you consider enjoyable ways to add movement to your life, take time to praise yourself for the ways you are already moving in your day-to-day routine.

Adding movement to improve your mental health

Here are some tips for adding movement to your everyday life to improve your mental health:

Start small: Try walking down extra aisles next time you go to a store. Stretch at your desk throughout the workday. Do five push-ups, lunges, or jumping jacks at a time. Take a brief walk in the sun during your lunch break.

Dance: You'd be surprised to see how much moving to the music for a couple of minutes can boost your mood — whether in your car, at your desk, or at home.

Search YouTube: You can find many useful videos for walking or other home activities that use household items for movement. There are also playlists that can help you stay motivated. Remember to consult your doctor before starting a new or strenuous activity routine.

Pair moving with something you enjoy: You can read or watch your favorite show while using a treadmill. You can make playlists of your favorite songs or podcasts to listen to while you walk, run, or stretch. Don't be afraid to get creative!

Make movement social: Meet up with a friend to take the dog on a walk, push a young family member on a park swing, or try a TikTok dance with your child. There are also activity apps that let you add friends, make your movement competitive, or even join virtual monthly marathons just by counting your steps!

Finding opportunities to move when it feels difficult

Many factors that affect our health are beyond our control. Even when we can't change everything, noticing what we can influence is important for our well-being. In the face of difficulties — whatever they may be — remember, movement is not an all-or-nothing thing.

What you do for yourself doesn't have to look like what someone else does. For example, if you live with chronic pain or limited mobility, you could reach out to your doctor or physical therapist to discuss moves or stretches that you can do. This may even help with pain and offer moments of mindfulness.

There are also many things that you can do inside that count as movement, such as cleaning, moving while watching TV, or dancing, if being outside isn't a safe option.

Remember that even when things feel challenging, you have the power to take small steps toward improving your health and well-being. Finding ways to move that feel good to you can be one of those steps.

If having good days feels hard, know that help is available and that you are not alone. Check on your mental health with a free, quick, anonymous test at mhascreening.org.

Explore additional resources and tools for more good days at mhanational.org/may.



N.O.P.E. PROGRAM

NAUGATUCK VALLEY OVERDOSE PREVENTION & EDUCATION

NATIONAL PREVENTION WEEK
A CELEBRATION OF POSSIBILITY

May 10-16, 2026



#NationalPreventionWeek is a platform that promotes new ideas and initiatives to help keep communities healthy & safe. Join us as we celebrate the substance use prevention and well-being efforts happening nationwide!

Learn more: samhsa.gov/prevention-week

What is National Prevention Week?

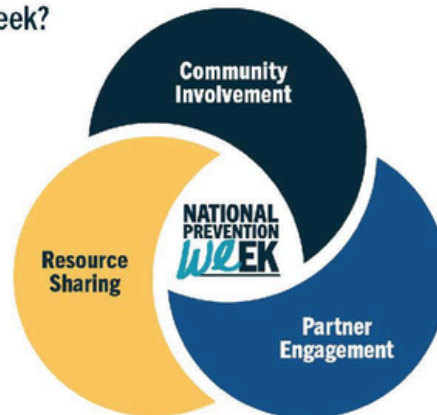
National Prevention Week is a public education platform showcasing the work of communities and organizations across the country that are preventing substance use and misuse and promoting positive mental health.

Each year during the second week of May, dedicated individuals, communities, and organizations come together to celebrate the possibilities and brighter futures that exist thanks to prevention and promotion.

National Prevention Week promotes the world we want to see—where prevention helps keep people and communities healthy and safe.

What are the main goals of National Prevention Week?

- Involve communities in raising awareness about substance use and misuse and mental health issues, data-driven prevention strategies, and the effectiveness of evidence-based prevention programs.
- Foster partnerships and collaborations informed by community experience and dedicated to improving public health.
- Promote and disseminate quality resources and publications.



More than **1 in 4 adults with serious mental health conditions also experiences a substance use issue.**

These two are often part of the same story. Whole-person care addresses both.

Learn more: <https://www.samhsa.gov/co-occurring-disorders>

With **INTEGRATED CARE**,
a more complete
RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE
for people with co-occurring disorders.



SAMHSA

NAUGATUCK VALLEY FOOD COALITION

On Friday, April 24, 2026, individuals representing organizations and communities across the Naugatuck Valley region came together for the initial Naugatuck Valley Food Coalition planning workshop. The goal of this workshop is to re-establish and re-imagine a structured, collaborative approach to addressing a variety of topics related to food and nutrition across the Valley region (Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, Naugatuck, Oxford, Seymour, Shelton).



The Planning Team is now working on drafting the coalition bylaws and designing the structure for a successful, sustainable initiative. In the meantime, we are recruiting individuals and organization representatives to join our coalition.

Who should join?

Don't see your discipline represented? Let us know!

- Food Banks and Pantries
- Social Service Providers
- Schools & PTO
- Youth Organizations
- Case Managers
- Public Health
- Healthcare
- Community-based Organizations
- Municipal Leadership
- Council of Governments
- Legislature
- Farms & Agriculture
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Libraries
- Chamber of Commerce
- Community Members



Interested individuals should contact Jess Kristy at jkristy@nvhd.org for more information.

HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF FOOD ACCESS IN CONNECTICUT

Take our 2-4 minute Community Voice Survey

WHO SHOULD RESPOND?
Anyone who lives in Connecticut! Individuals, families, and organizations are all welcome.

WHY YOUR VOICE MATTERS
Your input helps guide real decisions about food access, support programs, and community priorities.

QUICK & EASY
It takes just 2-4 minutes to make a difference.

SCAN TO TAKE THE SURVEY!

Takes just 2-4 minutes!

YOUR INPUT WILL HELP:

SHAPE STATEWIDE FOOD SECURITY RECOMMENDATIONS

HIGHLIGHT COMMUNITY NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

INFORM PUBLIC REPORTS (OPTIONAL TO BE QUOTED)

HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD. TAKE THE SURVEY TODAY!

Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity

This is your opportunity to use your voice to help shape food policy in Connecticut!

The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity (CWCSEO) produces an annual report on food insecurity and related recommendations every year.

One of the most important parts is input from Connecticut residents.

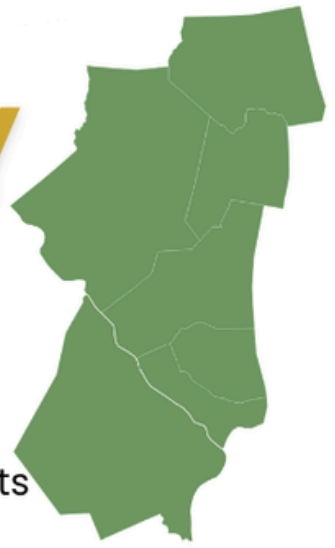
Take 2-4 minutes to fill out the survey using the link below or scanning the QR code.

Help create a Connecticut where no one is hungry!

English: <https://bit.ly/4udUvPU>

Español: <https://bit.ly/4cYlg3U>

NAUGATUCK VALLEY FOOD RESOURCE MAP




 Food Banks and Pantries

 24/7 Little Free Pantries

 Valley Community Gardens

 Farms and Farmers Markets

 Teaching Kitchen

 Miscellaneous

SCAN ME



bit.ly/ValleyFoodResourceMap



THE FOOD ALLERGY EPIDEMIC



Claim lines with diagnoses of anaphylactic food reactions increased 377 percent between 2007 and 2016.



Prevalence and Severity of Food Allergies Among US Adults. JAMA Network Open 2019
The Public Health Impact of Parent-Reported Childhood Food Allergies in the United States. Pediatrics 2018
Food Allergy in the United States: Recent Trends and Costs – An Analysis of Private Claims Data. FARE Health White Paper, November 2017.

Food Allergy Awareness Week May 10 - 16, 2026

What is a Food Allergy?

- A food allergy is “an adverse health effect resulting from a specific immune response that occurs reproducibly on exposure to a given food.”¹
- In plain language, a food allergy is when a person’s immune system overreacts to something in a certain food. This part of the food that the body reacts to is usually a protein and is called an allergen. The immune system thinks the allergen is a threat and tries to attack it. This response can cause a range of symptoms, which are called an allergic reaction.

<https://www.foodallergy.org>



<https://www.fda.gov/food/nutrition-food-labeling-and-critical-foods/food-allergies>

FOOD ALLERGEN AWARENESS

You play an important part!

Know the "BIG 9" Major Food Allergens



Peanuts



Tree Nuts



Fish



Shellfish



Eggs



Milk



Wheat



Soy



Sesame

When a Customer Notifies You That They Have a Food Allergy

- **Take it seriously.** Allergic reactions can be life-threatening.
- **Report** allergy information to the manager or person in charge.
- **Report** allergy information to food preparation staff.
- **Know** about the menu items and their specific ingredients.
- **Provide accurate information** to customers with food allergies.
- **Communicate effectively** with customers about their concerns.

Allergy Symptoms to Look Out For



Wheezing



Skin reactions like hives, swelling, or itching



Anaphylaxis including trouble breathing & dizziness



Burning sensation in the lips & mouth



Runny Nose



Itchy & Watery Eyes

Cross Contact

Cross Contact occurs when an allergen touches an ingredient that does not contain the allergen. For example, when tongs used for fish touches lettuce or other nonallergen food.

Preventing Cross Contact

- Label allergens in storage and store away from non-allergens.
- Wash hands, utensils, and surfaces between allergen and non-allergen foods. Sanitize surfaces, as needed.
- Use clean utensils and equipment for food preparation. Wear clean disposable non-latex gloves.
- Be aware of cooking oil, splatter, and steam from cooking foods with allergens.

CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY IF YOU OBSERVE ANY OF THE SYMPTOMS AND NOTIFY YOUR MANAGER.

MAY



HEPATITIS AWARENESS MONTH



WHAT IS VIRAL HEPATITIS?

Viral hepatitis is an **inflammation of the liver** caused by various viruses, leading to a range of health issues, some of which can be severe or fatal



MAIN TYPES OF HEPATITIS INCLUDE:

Hepatitis A: Causes acute infection and is often spread through **contaminated food or water**. Vaccination is available and effective for prevention.

Hepatitis B: Can cause acute and chronic infections. It is transmitted through **contact with infectious body fluids, such as blood and semen**. Vaccination is also available.

Hepatitis C: Primarily causes chronic infection and is mainly **spread through blood-to-blood contact**. There is no vaccine, but effective treatments are available that can cure the infection.



Signs and Symptoms

You can have hepatitis even if you don't have symptoms

Symptoms of all types of viral hepatitis are similar and can include one or more of the following:

- Dark urine or clay-colored stools
- Diarrhea (hepatitis A only)
- Feeling tired
- Fever
- Joint pain
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea, stomach pain, throwing up
- Yellow skin or eyes (jaundice)



SCREENING, TESTING, & DIAGNOSIS

Getting tested is the only way to know if you have hepatitis. Talk to your Doctor.



Any questions? Call Nurse Kristie at 203.881.3255, ext. 107