**Our Mission**

“To assure the highest possible level of health for the people of the communities we serve.”

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**April is National Public Health Month**

“Healthiest Nation in One Generation”

Take Action! Participate in American Public Health Association’s (APHA) legislative action alerts and urge policymakers to vote for and act on behalf of public health programs and services.

While the United States spends more on health care than any other nation in the world, it lags behind many developed nations in important health measures. Compared with other developed nations, the United States has relatively low life expectancy, high infant mortality rates, a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and persistent health inequities.

This is simply unacceptable. Since the early 1900s, APHA has vigorously promoted the need for universal health care coverage. However, while universal access to health care is vital to improving the health of our nation, it is just one element of reforming our health system. In order to more fully and effectively achieve a healthier nation we need to ensure the underlying social and economic conditions that allow individuals and communities to be healthy.

We must continue to shift from a nation solely focused on treating individual illness to one that also promotes population-based health services that encourage preventive and early intervention practices. Further funding for vital public health agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), along with state and local health departments will help promote community-based education and outreach programs.

Public health and the prevention strategies that it promotes form the foundation for health system reform. Delivering resources to entire communities has more positive health impacts on people than individual interventions alone. Population-based programs address main causes of disease, disability and health disparities for a wide range of people and can help achieve increased value for our health dollar. These programs, in conjunction with stronger health care coverage and delivery, will lead to a true change in our nation’s health.

Now that President Obama has signed the new health reform law, we need to continue our efforts through the implementation process to make our country the healthiest nation in one generation. APHA has created a website as a guide to the latest information on health reform. You can visit their website at [http://www.apha.org/advocacy](http://www.apha.org/advocacy).
Five Important Reasons to Vaccinate Your Child

You want to do what is best for your children. You know about the importance of car seats, baby gates and other ways to keep them safe. But, did you know that one of the best ways to protect your children is to make sure they have all of their vaccinations?

Immunizations can save your child’s life. Because of advances in medical science, your child can be protected against more diseases than ever before. Some diseases that once injured or killed thousands of children, have been eliminated completely and others are close to extinction—primarily due to safe and effective vaccines. One example of the great impact that vaccines can have is the elimination of polio in the United States. Polio was once America’s most-feared disease, causing death and paralysis across the country, but today, thanks to vaccination, there are no reports of polio in the United States.

Vaccination is very safe and effective. Vaccines are only given to children after a long and careful review by scientists, doctors, and healthcare professionals. Vaccines will involve some discomfort and may cause pain, redness, or tenderness at the site of injection but this is minimal compared to the pain, discomfort, and trauma of the diseases these vaccines prevent. Serious side effects following vaccination, such as severe allergic reaction, are very rare. The disease-prevention benefits of getting vaccines are much greater than the possible side effects for almost all children.

Immunization protects others you care about. Children in the U.S. still get vaccine-preventable diseases. In fact, we have seen resurgences of measles and whooping cough (pertussis) over the past few years. From January through July 2013, more than 11,000 cases of whooping cough were reported, with cases in every state. Last year was a record year, with over 11,000 cases reported, the most since 1955. There were also 18 deaths reported in 2012, most of which were among babies younger than 3 months old. Unfortunately, some babies are too young to be completely vaccinated and some people may not be able to receive certain vaccinations due to severe allergies, weakened immune systems from conditions like leukemia, or other reasons. To help keep them safe, it is important that you and your children who are able to get vaccinated are fully immunized. This not only protects your family, but also helps prevent the spread of these diseases to your friends and loved ones.

Immunizations can save your family time and money. A child with a vaccine-preventable disease can be denied attendance at schools or daycare facilities. Some vaccine-preventable diseases can result in prolonged disabilities and can take a financial toll because of lost time at work, medical bills or long-term disability care. In contrast, getting vaccinated against these diseases is a good investment and usually covered by insurance. The Vaccines for Children (VFC) program is a federally funded program that provides vaccines at no cost to children from low-income families. To find out more about the VFC program, visit http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/ or ask your child’s health care professional.

Immunization protects future generations. Vaccines have reduced and, in some cases, eliminated many diseases that killed or severely disabled people just a few generations ago. For example, smallpox vaccination eradicated that disease worldwide. Your children don’t have to get smallpox shots any more because the disease no longer exists. By vaccinating children against rubella (German measles), the risk that pregnant women will pass this virus on to their fetus or newborn has been dramatically decreased, and birth defects associated with that virus no longer are seen in the United States. If we continue vaccinating now, and vaccinating completely, parents in the future may be able to trust that some diseases of today will no longer be around to harm their children in the future.

For more information about the importance of infant immunization, call the Health Department at 774-1868 or 265-9913 or visit http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines.
May is Food Safety Month

With summertime approaching and backyard barbecues and family picnics on the horizon, the Health Department wants to take the opportunity to reinforce proper food handling and inform Michigan residents that food safety is not an option, but an obligation. Consumers need to know simple steps they can take to prevent foodborne illness.

As the temperature rises, so does the risk of foodborne illness. Hot, humid weather creates the perfect conditions for the rapid growth of bacteria. Summer also means more people are cooking outside at picnics, barbecues and camping trips, without easy access to refrigeration and hand washing facilities to keep food safe.

To minimize the risks of foodborne illness, follow these four easy steps when handling and preparing food:

**Step One – Clean**

**Wash hands and surfaces often to avoid the spread of bacteria.**

- Wash your hands with hot, soapy water for at least 20 seconds before handling food, and after handling raw meats or poultry, using the bathroom, touching pets or changing diapers.

Always wash raw fruits and vegetables in clean water. You cannot tell whether foods carry surface bacteria by the way they look, smell or taste.

**Step Two – Separate**

**Keep raw meats and poultry separate from cooked foods to avoid cross-contamination.**

- When you pack a cooler for an outing, wrap uncooked meats and poultry securely, and put them on the bottom to prevent raw juices from dripping onto other foods.

Wash all plates, utensils, and cutting boards that touched or held raw meat or poultry before using them again for cooked foods.

**Step Three – Cook**

**Make sure you kill harmful bacteria by properly cooking food.**

- Traditional visual cues like color are not a guarantee that food is safe. Don't guess! Take a digital instant-read food thermometer along to check when meat and poultry are safe to eat. Cooked foods are safe to eat when internal temperatures are:
  - 68° C (155° F) for ground beef or pork meat
  - 74° C (165° F) for leftover food and boned and deboned poultry parts
  - 74° C (165° F) for whole poultry

**Step Four - Chill: Keep cold food cold**

- Perishable foods that are normally in the refrigerator, such as luncheon meats, cooked meat, chicken, and potato or pasta salads, must be kept in an insulated cooler with freezer packs or blocks of ice to keep the temperature at or below 5° C (41° F).

- Put leftovers back in the cooler as soon as you are finished eating.

*The simple rule is: When in doubt, throw it out.*
May is National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month

The Smart Source for Asthma Management

Get the Whole Story
What you know: Asthma affects one of the most important organs in the body—the lungs.

What you might not know: The condition causes inflammation in all airways of the lungs, both large and small. These airways carry air in and out of the body. Treating inflammation in both the large and small airways may help in managing asthma symptoms.

Do you also know?: It’s possible to have inflammation even when typical signs of asthma, like wheezing and coughing, are absent.

If you or your child has been diagnosed with persistent asthma, you may need to treat that inflammation every day. That’s why it’s important to know the whole story about managing persistent asthma.

Get the Facts About Asthma
Armed with the right knowledge, attitude and a proactive approach to asthma management, you can minimize the symptoms associated with persistent asthma. This website, www.getsmartaboutasthma.com offers information about the latest research in asthma, and tools and resources to help you talk with a doctor, control asthma symptoms on a daily basis and be an advocate for yourself or your child. It’s time to get smart about asthma.