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HEALTHtoday



Right Care at the Right Time

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Seasonal Flu Reminder

The best way to protect yourself and your family from influenza is to get the flu vaccine.

Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a yearly flu vaccine. It takes about 2 weeks for your body to develop an immune response. Get vaccinated now so that you will be protected all season long.

Call the Albany County Department of Health today to schedule your flu shot at (518) 447-4589.

When you don't feel well or are in pain, it is natural to want to get medical help quickly. People often turn to emergency departments for fast relief even for non-emergency conditions. A Healthy Capital District Initiative (HCDI) study (2008) indicates that nearly *half* of all visits to Capital Region emergency departments (ED) were treatable in a primary care setting. Specifically, the HCDI study concluded the following:



- Most people do not distinguish health needs requiring emergent care from primary care.
- Convenience and quality care are the most common reason people use a hospital emergency department.
- Pain related issues (e.g. urinary tract infections, abdominal pain, dental needs, and ear aches for children) and the common cold are the most common non-emergency uses of the emergency department.
- Emergency department use is most prevalent in communities that are closest to hospitals, have lower average income, and where use of emergency department for most health care needs is a cultural norm.

Of course, health care services in EDs are of high quality, but by not using a primary care physician, patients do not receive the preventive health services and care coordination for chronic conditions that can prevent more serious health problems in the future.

The Healthy Capital District Initiative is working with the Albany County Department of Health and other local health departments, primary care providers (PCPs), insurers, community organizations and hospitals to educate people about the importance of primary care. A primary care physician is a key member of your health care team. Your PCP keeps all your health records which is important to understand changes in your health, provides important prevention services to stop or treat big health

threats early, and coordinates your care when your health needs are complicated.

The best way to receive the benefits of primary care is to:

- ⇒ Select a primary care physician
- ⇒ Make a well visit - establish your primary care physician so that you can be treated when you are sick
- ⇒ Contact your PCP first when you have a health problem
- ⇒ Talk with your PCP about when health problems arise after hours, so you know what to do
- ⇒ Keep important medical information with you
- ⇒ Make sure you know which emergency services are covered by your health insurance and the instructions you need to follow in urgent situations

For more information on the value of primary care, HCDI research, finding a PCP that accepts your insurance, or how to get affordable health insurance, visit www.hcdiny.org.



Are You Ready, Albany County?

Hurricane Irene showed us just how devastating Mother Nature can be. This large and powerful hurricane left extensive damage along its path and the Capital District was no exception. Many residents experienced extensive flooding and wind damage. Power outages were widespread and some residents were forced to evacuate their homes.

So just how prepared were our residents for this disaster? Hard to say. What we do know, however, is that in a 2010 survey by Siena Research Institute, 70% of county residents indicated they were not concerned about being affected by a disaster. In addition, 33% said they were not prepared for a disaster with only 55% being "somewhat prepared". When asked why they were not prepared, 95% of the respondents indicated "they did not have the time or did not know how to develop a plan."

September was designated as National Preparedness Month and the fall is a great opportunity for you to create an emergency preparedness plan! Below are suggested steps to get you started:

Make a Plan

Your family may not be together when an emergency or disaster occurs.

Develop a communications plan that identifies where family members should meet if you have to leave your home. Choose an out-of-town relative to serve as your point of contact so that family members can "check-in".

Prepare a Kit

Be prepared to have adequate quantities of food, water and supplies to last for at least 3 days. Consider your family's unique needs. Items to consider: water, non-perishable



food, flashlight, batteries, prescription medications, infant formula and diapers, personal hygiene items, important family documents. Items

should be kept in a waterproof container and placed in a space that is easily accessible. If you have a special need, consider all the strategies, services, devices, tools and techniques you use to live with on a daily basis.

Be Informed

Taking the time to learn more about specific emergencies such as floods, power outages, acts of terrorism and



pandemics will enable you and your family to devise appropriate plans tailored to your family's needs. Learn more about your community's emergency plans.

Get Involved

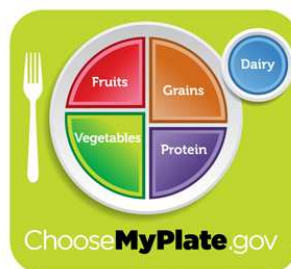
Once your household is prepared, consider helping your community prepare for or respond to a disaster. The Albany County Department of Health and Albany County Sheriff's Office urge residents to register as emergency response volunteers at www.RegisteredandReady.com.

Preparing for emergencies and disasters is the responsibility of an entire community, starting at the household/individual level and continuing through all levels of society and government. The Albany County Department of Health collaborates with the Albany County Sheriff's Office and other community partners to educate residents about the importance of being prepared. For additional information, call (518) 447-4590 or email BeReady@albanycounty.com.

Did You Know... ?

1) This year the USDA released new food guidelines to replace the Food Guide Pyramid. ChooseMyPlate is designed to:

- Help consumers make better food choices
- Remind consumers to eat healthfully
- Illustrate the 5 food groups using a familiar mealtime visual, the place setting



Check out ChooseMyPlate at: www.ChooseMyPlate.gov

2) Children and teens are more likely to get a concussion and take longer to recover than adults. New York State has passed legislation that will prevent students who may have suffered a concussion in a school sport or gym class from returning to play until they have been without symptoms for at least one day and have been cleared by a physician.

Achieving Better Birth Outcomes

If you ask an expecting mother whether she wants a girl or a boy she will often reply, “It really doesn’t matter as long as the baby is healthy.” Staying healthy during pregnancy and having a healthy baby are common goals for pregnant women. However, not all newborns will survive the first year of life.

In Albany County, for every 1,000 live births there are approximately 8 deaths before the first birthday, with most deaths occurring in the first 28 days of life. Birth defects, prematurity (baby born before 37 complete weeks of pregnancy) and low birth weight (baby born weighing less than 5.5 pounds) are leading causes of infant deaths. In Albany County 11.2% of all births are premature and 8.2% are low birth weight. Both Black and Hispanic mothers have higher percentages of premature and low weight births than white mothers and experience higher rates of infant deaths.

Steps you can take to ensure the best outcome for both mother and baby:

Get routine health and dental care.

Take care of your health even before you get pregnant to minimize risks to both mom and baby during pregnancy. If you have a medical condition, such as diabetes, asthma, or high blood pressure, be sure it is under control.



Get early prenatal care as soon as you know you are pregnant. Early and regular prenatal care is important for the health of both mother and the develop-

ing baby. In Albany County only 77.5% of pregnant women get early prenatal care. Black, Hispanic and teen mothers are even less likely to access early prenatal care.

Take a multivitamin with at least 400 micrograms of folic acid every day, starting at least one month before you get pregnant, to help prevent major birth defects.

Do not smoke during pregnancy.

Babies born to women who smoke are more likely to be born premature, have low birth weight and die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Do not drink alcohol during pregnancy. There is no safe amount of alcohol to drink during pregnancy.

Eat a healthy diet all throughout your pregnancy.

Talk to your doctor about any medications you are taking, including over-the-counter medications or supplements, as some may be harmful to your baby.

Avoid contact with toxic substances at home or at work, including cat feces.

Wash your hands frequently to help protect against certain infections.

Get your annual flu shot, even if you are pregnant. This will protect you and your baby, even after the baby is born.

Breastfeed your baby. Breastfeeding offers numerous health benefits for both mothers and babies.

The Albany County Department of Health offers several programs for Albany County residents that provide assistance to pregnant women, new mothers and their babies to help achieve better birth outcomes. Public health nurses with the Maternal and Child Health Program make home visits to meet with families and provide health education as well as conduct skilled nursing assessments, develop a plan of care specific to the family’s needs, coordinate needed health and support services, and provide ongoing follow-up under the orders of a licensed physician. For more information call (518) 447-4615.

In addition, the Community Health Worker Program conducts outreach and home visits to pregnant women in specific Albany County high needs areas to ensure they are receiving important prenatal and primary care services as well as other social services. Community health workers provide education; support; and identify and remove barriers to needed services. For more information call (518) 447-4684.

Both programs accept referrals from all sources, including hospitals, clinics, health care providers, family, friends, teachers, and other agencies.

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Mission Statement

“The Mission of the Department of Health is to prevent diseases, epidemics, and injuries; to protect against hazards that affect health and safety; and to promote the healthy development of children and the wellness of all Albany County residents.”



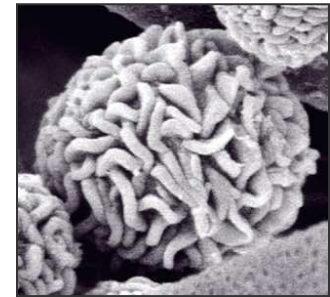
Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Mold Information

Recent storms have created ideal conditions for mold growth in homes and other buildings. What you need to know:

- Mold spores need three things to grow: moisture, a source of food to grow on, and the right temperature.
- The easiest way to prevent mold from growing is by keeping things clean and dry.
- Clean durable materials using detergent and water and allow to dry completely.

- Mold exposures can cause allergic reactions, asthma episodes, infections, and other respiratory problems. These health effects can also be caused by exposure to other biological contaminants such as dust mites and bacteria that also thrive under damp conditions.
- Clean and dry damp building materials (such as gypsum wall board) and furnishings within 24 to 48 hours of them becoming wet to limit mold growth.



Absorbent materials such as carpets and carpet padding, ceiling tiles, paper, cardboard boxes, etc. may need to be replaced. For more information about molds see the New York State Department of Health fact sheet on molds at: <http://www.health.state.ny.us/publications/7287.pdf>

Services Available at Albany County Department of Health

(518) 447-4580

Clinical Services

Immunizations, Tuberculosis, STD and Children’s Dental Services

Communicable Disease Program

Information and education for health care providers and county residents

Environmental Health Services

Regulation of public food service, pools/beaches. Children’s camps, hotel/motels, tattoo/piercing, private/public water and septic, rabies, lead and tobacco

Health Education and Wellness

Information and education for individuals, businesses, schools, and community groups

Maternal and Child Health Programs

Home visiting for pregnant women, parenting families, and children

Public Health Preparedness

Emergency planning, Pandemic Flu and bioterrorism awareness

HIV/AIDS/STD Education

HIV Testing and Counseling



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