



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 3, 2017

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How Public Health Impacts Your Life

National Public Health Week – April 3-9, 2017

SPRINGFIELD — If you have ever eaten at a restaurant, used a public swimming pool, gone to a hospital, needed an ambulance, or received a flu shot, you’ve received public health services. The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), in conjunction with 97 certified health departments across the state, works every day to control infectious diseases, ensure food safety, conduct newborn screenings, provide immunizations, regulate hospitals and nursing homes, compile birth, death, and other statistics, and educate communities on how to live healthier lives. April 3-9, 2017, is National Public Health Week, a time to recognize the contributions of public health and highlight issues that are important to improving the health of our nation.

“Public health is like an invisible shield that protects you from disease outbreaks caused by noroviruses, measles, salmonella, and many others, as well as protecting you from chronic conditions like heart disease and obesity by providing education and programs for healthy living,” said IDPH Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “Each day this week, health departments around the state will be sharing stories about the value public health adds to your life.”

Today we’re celebrating public health and recognizing all those who work to keep our communities safe and healthy.

Tuesday we’re talking about communicable and infectious diseases and how public health protects you. For example, the Winnebago County Health Department held a tire recycling drive at the end of March where more than 2,000 tires were removed from rural and urban areas. Old tires left outside are a great place for mosquitoes to breed. To help protect the public from mosquito-borne diseases like West Nile virus and Zika virus, the Winnebago County Health Department worked to help eliminate or reduce the problem before summer began.

Wednesday is chronic disease day. The Lake County Health Department is working to decrease the risk of obesity and heart disease through a nature program called *Rx for Health: Walking in Nature*. Eight times a year a physician and a naturalist will lead free walks in various forest preserves. While walking, participants can talk with a physician about the health benefits of walking and also learn more about the outdoor environment from a forest preserve naturalist.

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On Thursday, many health departments will highlight the behavioral health work they do. One of the biggest behavioral and mental health issues Illinois and the nation faces is the opioid epidemic. While public health is tackling the problem, it will take the community working together to bring an end to the opioid crisis. One example is a series of videos created by the Pekin Police Department called *The Faces of Heroin*. It's a six part series that can be found on YouTube. Part 1 can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWw9fJd09DE>.

Friday we're talking about the importance of immunizations. Local health departments are superheroes when it comes to providing immunizations to protect communities from measles, mumps, whooping cough, the flu, and many more diseases. The Wayne/Hamilton County Health Department hosted Wonder Woman and Spiderman this fall for flu shots.



All this week during National Public Health Week, we encourage you to share your story on the IDPH Facebook page about how public health has affected your life. Maybe you were at a health fair and the local health department discovered you had high blood pressure, which led you to see your doctor. Or maybe you worked with your local health department to create smoke-free outdoor areas in your community. Share your story with us so we can thank all the public health professionals who work so hard to keep our communities safe and healthy. [Facebook.com/IDPH.Illinois](https://www.facebook.com/IDPH.Illinois).

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