



LLHD Quarterly

Spring 2012

Keeping you updated on your local health department

April Prescription Drug Take-Back Event a Success



Every six months, Ledge Light Health District participates in the national prescription drug-take back initiative by co-sponsoring a take-back event at the Groton Senior Center and the Groton City Municipal Building.

On April 28, Ledge Light Program Coordinators Michelle Hamilton and Carolyn Wilson joined Groton Town Police in collecting enough prescription drugs to fill seven large cardboard boxes. Four of those boxes were filled within the first hour-and-a-half of the event.

“Community members were all very thankful for the event,” said Police Officer Kelly Crandall, “Many of them said they did not know how to dispose of medications. They were relieved to properly dispose of medication they had been holding on to.”

Michelle Hamilton said

proper disposal of prescription drugs is an important part of preventing teen prescription drug abuse. According to the DEA, every day about 2,500 teens use prescription drugs to get high for the first time. “The Groton Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition has surveyed youth five times over the last ten years. Those surveys have shown a slow, steady increase in unauthorized prescription drug use,” Hamilton said. “In 2010, 21.5% of 11-12 graders admitted to using a prescription drug without a doctor or dentist script.”

You can find locations for prescription drug take-back events at ct.gov/dcp by clicking on the PMP button on the left side. If you need to dispose of prescription drugs and you can't attend a local take-back event, you can take them to a prescription drug drop box at the Waterford or New London police departments (and soon, the Groton City and Town Police departments) year-round or follow these guidelines from the FDA for home disposal:

- Take the drugs out of their original containers and mix them with an undesirable substance, such as coffee grounds or cat litter. The medication will be less appealing to children and pets and unrecognizable

to people who may intentionally go through your trash.

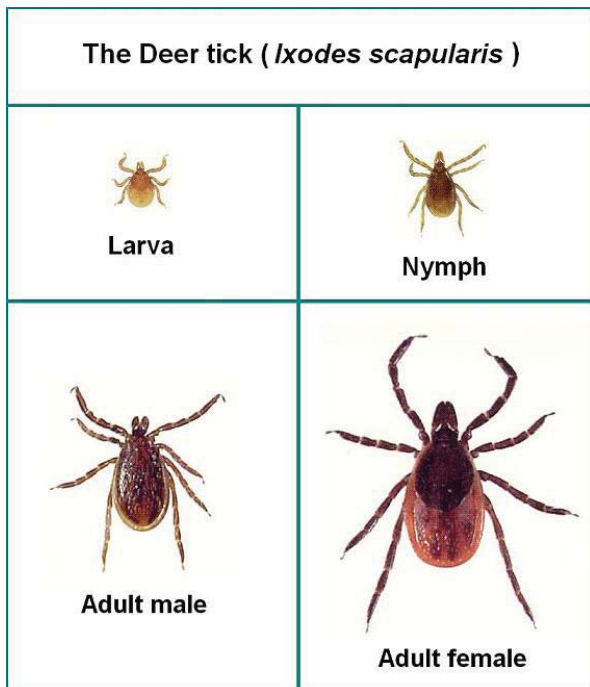
- Put them in a sealable bag, empty can, or other container to prevent the medication from leaking or breaking out of a garbage bag.
- Before throwing out a medicine container, scratch out all identifying information on the prescription label to make it unreadable. This will help protect your identity and the privacy of your personal health information.

The next take-back event at the Groton Senior Center and the Groton Municipal Building will be in October, date TBA.



One of the seven boxes filled with expired and unwanted prescription drugs from the April 2012 drug take-back event at the Groton Senior Center.

Protecting Yourself Against Lyme Disease



Deer ticks can transmit Lyme disease, so it is important to be able to identify a deer tick.

May through September is peak tick season, as ticks become active whenever the temperature rises above 45°F. Deer ticks are very common in our area, so it is important to know how you can protect yourself from Lyme disease.

Ways to keep ticks out of your yard:

- Keep the grass cut short.
- Remove leaf litter, brush and weeds at the edge of your lawn.
- Restrict use of groundcover, such as pachysandra.
- Remove all brush and leaves around stone walls and wood piles.
- Avoid landscape plants that deer like to eat.
- Seal stone walls and small openings around the home.
- Move firewood piles and bird feeders away from the home.

- Trim tree branches around lawn edges to let in more sunlight.
- Create a three-foot-wide woodchip or gravel border between the lawn and woods.

What to do if you find a tick on yourself or someone else:

- Remove the tick with tweezers or forceps.
- DON'T use tape, soap, oil, etc. to remove the tick if you are having the tick tested. These and other applications cause a delay in the testing process
- Clean the bite site with antiseptic, alcohol, etc.

You can submit the tick to us for testing by mail or in person. The tick will be tested at the CT Agriculture Extension Station laboratory in New Haven. There is a fee of \$20 for tick submission and processing. Results can take up to 30 days. You will be contacted by mail with your results as soon as they are received by Ledge Light Health District. If you are submitting a tick for testing:

- You can find the tick submission form on our website at www.ledgelighthd.org under the Programs and Data section.
- Place the tick in a small zip bag. If it's still alive, add a few blades of grass or other live greenery.
- **Keep in mind that Dog ticks do not transmit Lyme disease and will not be accepted for testing.**



Male and female dog ticks. Dog ticks do not transmit Lyme disease.

Be aware of Lyme disease symptoms:

If you find a tick on you, remove it promptly and watch for flu-like symptoms. Symptoms may include headache, fever, stiff neck, muscle aches, fatigue, chills, abdominal pain, nausea and sensitivity to light. Late symptoms may include neurological disorders, arthritis and heart abnormalities.

It is common for tick bites to yield a rash at the bite site. Some rashes appear as a bull's eye pattern. A rash that increases to the size of a nickel or larger and multiple rashes should be checked by a physician.

A blood test for Lyme disease will normally yield negative results if done within the first 30 days of the bite. Your physician will decide if a test may be best for you. After considering your other medical issues, your doctor may prescribe an antibiotic to treat Lyme disease.

Beach Water Testing: Why We Do It



McCook Point Park Beach in Niantic.

Many residents throughout our District like to take advantage of the warm weather by spending time with their friends and family at local beaches.

Ledge Light samples the water at designated swimming areas within the District to make sure that residents and visitors can be assured the water they are swimming in is safe.

According to Senior Sanitarian George Calkins, designated swimming areas “are primarily a recognized municipal beach or secondarily a private association beach, as opposed to a mere body of water where people swim.”

“We typically test water every Monday morning from Memorial Day through Labor Day,” said Steve Mansfield, Deputy Director. He said the samples get sent to the state lab for testing and Ledge Light gets notified of the results within 24 hours. “If a site gets highly

elevated levels, we may close it,” he said. “But every sampling station has different characteristics.”

Mansfield said the Thames River is a good example because it opens into Long Island Sound. He said because the mouth of the river is higher volume and has more water exchange with the sound, a sample taken there could test differently from one taken further up the river where there is less water exchange.

“We have the ability, based on the number and quality of the samples, to let an area remain open, post a swimming advisory, or post a beach closure,” Mansfield said. “We have some flexibility to decide when we should close,” he said. “We only close a beach if there is a real risk.”

So what are our sanitarians looking for when they collect water samples? “We test for Enterococci, which is an indicator organism that can signal the presence of

other bacteria,” Mansfield said. However, “it doesn’t necessarily make you ill,” he said.

According to Mansfield, Enterococci bacteria are naturally occurring and are safe at appropriate levels. Calkins said typically levels below 104 colonies per 100ml sample of salt water are satisfactory. For fresh water, levels below 235 colonies per 100ml are standard. Calkins said these numbers are based on a federal scale, which was created through years of studies.

However, higher levels do not necessarily pose a danger to the public. “The absolute number is still flexible for interpretation. We base our decision on whether to close or post an advisory on a sanitary survey,” Calkins said. “We assess risks based on environmental factors.” Calkins said there are many factors that can effect bacteria levels on any given day, such as rainfall, storm drains, the presence of seagulls or other animals that may defecate in the water, urban runoff, or nearby sewage facilities. He said these are considered known sources of contamination. “Our goal is to generally assess water quality over the long term” he said.

“You can never be 100% sure about the quality of the water on a particular day that it is not tested,” Mansfield said. “But you can be assured that it is tested on a regular basis.”

Celebrating National Public Health Week

In 1995, President William Jefferson Clinton proclaimed the first full week of April as National Public Health Week (NPHW). Each year since then, the public health community has celebrated this observance by focusing on a theme that is important to improving the public's health.

The theme this year was "A Healthier America Begins Today." Ledge Light Health District celebrated this year's theme by going to local libraries to promote all the little things we can do to prevent disease and illness in our communities. "Our approach this year was to increase awareness about what



LLHD Program Coordinator Carolyn Wilson promotes public health at the Groton Public Library for National Public Health Week.

public health is and to educate our residents about what their health department does," said Program Coordinator Carolyn Wilson.

Ledge Light staff created display boards with information

about the services we provide and handed out materials with helpful information such as Lyme disease prevention, emergency preparedness guides and chronic disease prevention tips. They also promoted events such as the annual prescription drug take-back event in Groton.

"Some residents think of us as mainly a regulatory body with a focus on food service and land use. Our goal was to show our residents that we are dedicated to health education and preventing disease in our communities. People were surprised by the variety of work we do," Wilson said.

Minority Health Summit Brings Together Many in Community



AAHC Co-Chairs Rev. Kenn Harris and Ledge Light board member Jackie Massett at the 2012 Minority Health Summit.

On April 21, The African American Health Council of Southeastern CT (AAHC) and Ledge Light Health District hosted a Minority Health Summit in Groton. Local and state

public health professionals and practitioners joined community and faith-based organizations and other interested community members for the event.

"The work of the AAHC has been to address and eradicate health disparities and increase the opportunity for African Americans to enjoy the highest quality of life in the communities where they live, work, play and pray," said Rev. Kenn Harris, AAHC Co-Chair in his keynote address.

Formed in 2007, the AAHC is a culturally-diverse, community-based coalition whose vision is a healthier Black community.

The Summit provided a forum for AAHC to join community partners and interested individuals in discussing prominent health issues among minority populations and strategies for improving them. Breakout session conversations were lively and engaging, and covered topics such as "Building Leaders on the Front Line," "Using Social Networking to Create Healthy Communities," "Communicating: Cross-Cultural Encounters," "Shifting the Focus to Policy Changes" and "Connecting Faith-Based Leadership and Healthy Communities."

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