



New Britain Health Department

"Dedicated to Promoting the Public's Health"

*New Britain:
A City for All
People*

Volume 2 Issue 1

Spring is in bloom – are your allergies?



Spring goes into full bloom, yet you are in real misery. Some people fight battles with certain foods, chemicals or airborne particles.

What causes these reactions?

An allergic reaction occurs when your body thinks certain foods, medicines, or air-borne particles are going to harm you. Your body fights back by setting off an allergic reaction.

People who have allergies have an immune system that reacts to a usually harmless substance in the environment. These substances are called **allergens**. Examples of these allergens are ragweed, pollen, grasses, air pollution, pet hair, and mold. Some allergens are ingested, like peanuts, milk, eggs, soy, fish, wheat, and certain medicines that cause reactions in the mouth, skin, and stomach. Other allergens are all around us like insects, pets, latex, cosmetics, chemicals in the air and even the sun. These affect the skin, causing rashes and hives.

Allergy symptoms can vary with each individual. **Mild reactions** include itchy, watery eyes, congestion or rash. These reactions do not spread to other parts of the body. **Moderate reactions** *do* spread to other body parts and include itching, hives and difficulty breathing.

A **Severe reaction**, called ***anaphylaxis***, is rare but life threatening. It can start with itching of the eyes and progress within a few minutes. Serious symptoms are abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, difficulty in swallowing or breathing and mental confusion. This reaction requires emergency medical care.

Not everyone has allergies. Many allergies are inherited, which means they are passed on to children by their parents. When one parent is allergic, the child has a 50% chance of having allergies and this risk jumps to 75% if both parents have allergies.

You can prevent serious allergic reactions. The first step is to identify the causes of your allergic reaction. These causes are called ***triggers***. A trigger can be as simple as your pet's hair or a reaction to a medicine.

Although there are no cures for allergies, simple measures can be taken to prevent serious complications.

- Take over-the-counter medications such as Benadryl or Claritin to treat only mild symptoms. If ineffective, consult your doctor.
- Do not eat foods that you are allergic to. One sign of allergy may be tingling in your mouth. You may develop cramps, diarrhea, hives, stuffy nose, or dizziness.
- Keep a record of your allergies. Be sure to notify your doctor if you develop new symptoms.
- Treat insect bites with cold packs and medication for pain, swelling and itching. Avoid future stings.

The arrival of Spring means sneezing, runny noses, and itchy eyes for up to 20% of Americans. There are ways to allergy-proof your home.

- 1) Crank up the Air Conditioner. It filters the incoming air and dehumidifies your house. Change the filter on your Air Conditioning.
- 2) If the allergen is in the air, the allergic reaction will likely occur in the eyes, nose or system.
- 3) Use an air purifier.
- 4) Twenty million of us are allergic to dust mites. Wash your bedding in hot water, which can kill the dust mites.
- 5) Vacuum regularly. Dogs and cats carry allergens in their saliva, urine and hair or fur. These allergens can build up in rugs or on furniture and bedding.
- 6) Fight the fur. Keep pets off couches and chairs.
- 7) Stay indoors when pollen counts are high.
- 8) Keep windows closed.

Most importantly, notify your doctor if symptoms persist. All family members should be aware of your allergy. Understand your allergy and know what you need to do to protect yourself.

Dietary Fiber: Good For Your Heart, Eyes and Blood Sugar Control

Studies suggest that diets which include the recommended daily amount of fiber, especially soluble fiber, can improve blood glucose control, lower cholesterol levels and delay the onset of vision problems in people with type 2 diabetes. So a diet high in fiber is good for your heart and your eyes.

The American Dietetic Association recommends that people eat between 20 and 35 grams of total fiber daily, and of that, 5 to 10 grams should be soluble fiber.

The best sources of soluble fiber are oats, especially oat bran, barley, dried beans, soybeans, sweet potato and white potato, broccoli, asparagus, carrot, apple, pear, citrus fruits, bananas, almonds, psyllium, and flax seed.

Insoluble fiber, what some call "roughage", is found in most fruits and vegetables as well as beans, grains, and nuts.

Many foods that are high in soluble fiber are also high in carbohydrates, so talk to your doctor before adding these foods to your diet.

New Orleans Style Red Beans and Rice

2 tsp. olive oil
1/2 large onion, chopped
1/2 red or green bell pepper, diced
1 small stalk of celery, diced
3 large garlic cloves, minced
1/4 tsp. dried thyme, crumbled
1 Tbsp. paprika
1/2 Tbsp. oregano
1/4 tsp. cayenne pepper
2 cups canned red kidney beans, rinsed and drained
1 1/2 cups fat free, reduced-sodium chicken broth
2 cups brown rice
Pinch of freshly ground black pepper

Heat the oil in a heavy saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion, bell pepper and celery and sauté for 4 minutes. Stir in the garlic, thyme and spices and cook until the vegetables are tender, about 2-3 minutes. Add the beans and broth. Simmer gently, uncovered, over low heat until the beans are creamy, 15-20 minutes (make sure not to overcook them). Serve the beans over brown rice.

Option: vegetarians can substitute the chicken broth with vegetable broth, or for a richer flavor try reduced-sodium tomato sauce

Makes 6 servings.

Per serving: Per serving: 170 calories, 2.5 g total fat (0 g saturated fat), 29 g carbohydrate, 6 g protein, 5 g dietary fiber, 140 mg sodium

New Britain Health Department

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EUGENE M. CICCONE, M.D.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

Hours of Operation
M-F 8:15AM-4:00PM
(860) 612-2771

Immunization Clinic
Monday and Friday
9AM-11AM
Wednesday 1PM-3PM

STD Clinic
Tuesday and Thursday
2PM-3:30PM

Tuberculosis Clinic
First Wednesday of every
month. For New Britain
residents only. Call for
information.

TB skin tests are
performed during the
immunization clinics.

**CIRTS/Immunization
Program**

Call for infant/toddler
referrals and records

HIV Counseling/Testing
Call for an appointment

Senior Happenings

The New Britain Health Department provides city residents age 60+ with the opportunity to visit with a nurse to discuss any health-related issues. The nurse can give blood pressure and glucose checks and information and counseling on diabetes, fall prevention, exercise, stress management, cholesterol, medication concerns and weight management. Visit the nurse at the Senior Center at 55 Pearl Street Monday, Tuesday and Friday between 8:30 and noon.

Spring

Spring-the perfect season to create goals and formulate plans. It's a time to reexamine the way you think, act and feel. Maybe it is time for a change. Start breaking down preconceived notions and building new ones. You can start small. Try having more conversations, and make a new friend. Perhaps it is time to change how you eat, stop smoking, and start exercising.

Enjoy nature and get out into the sunshine (but use sunscreen). Start walking and watch for the bird migration. Go to a Rock Cats game or catch a little league or youth soccer match at your local park. You can throw out a line and catch some fish or hit a few tennis or golf balls. New Britain parks and facilities offer many choices for spring activities. It is also the time to start thinking about planting seeds for cool season vegetables and early blooms. If you can't grow your own, visit your local produce market and add some spring vegetables to your diet. There are many ways to experience the season.

This is the season to feel your own pulse along with the awakening of nature. Spring is a season for life, growth, hope, brightness, and excitement. Get on out and enjoy it!

Health Tip: When Seniors Shouldn't Live Alone

Many seniors are reluctant to give up their independence in favor of a nursing home or assisted living facility.

But sometimes living alone poses a danger to the health and safety of an elderly loved one.

If you're in this position and need to speak with an older person about leaving the home, here are suggestions from AARP:

- Have a plan for the conversation, and try to ease into the topic rather than stating the problem bluntly.
- If the person becomes upset and is clear about not wanting to discuss the topic, let it go and bring it up another time.
- Emphasize that you are concerned for the person's health and safety, and explain how he or she is at risk by living alone.
- Ask the person specifically what he or she wants, doesn't want, and about his or her fears.
- Treat the person as an adult and with respect -- don't talk down to the person like a child.

What's Behind My Migraine? - Some Common Triggers

Migraines are severe headaches that can also cause nausea and sensitivity to light and sound. Migraines are more common in women than men. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services lists these common triggers of migraines in women:

- Not getting enough to eat.
- Not getting enough sleep.
- Exposure to bright lights or loud noise.
- Changes in the weather.
- Fluctuating hormone levels, such as during your period.
- Emotional factors, such as stress or anxiety.
- Chocolate, alcohol, nicotine or foods with additives such as MSG.

New Britain Immunization Program

announces

National Infant Immunization Week 2008



- National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW) is an annual observance to highlight the importance of protecting infants from vaccine-preventable diseases and to celebrate the achievements of immunization programs in promoting healthy communities. This year NIIW will be held April 19-26, 2008.
- Vaccines are among the most successful and cost-effective public health tools available for preventing disease and death. They not only help protect vaccinated individuals, but also help protect entire communities by preventing and reducing the spread of infectious diseases.
- Vaccination plays a critical role in safeguarding public health globally. During NIIW 2008, hundreds of communities across the United States will join those in the Western Hemisphere and Europe to celebrate Vaccination Week in the Americas (VWA) and European Immunization Week.
- Infants are particularly vulnerable to infectious diseases; that is why it is critical to protect them through immunization. Each day, nearly 12,000 babies are born in the United States who will need to be immunized against 14 vaccine-preventable diseases before age two.
- Immunization is a shared responsibility. Families, healthcare providers, and public health officials must work together to help protect the entire community.
- Immunizations are one of the most important ways parents can protect their children

against serious diseases. Parents are encouraged to talk to their healthcare provider to ensure that their infant is up-to-date on immunizations.

- Healthcare providers play a critical role in educating parents about the importance of immunization and ensuring that infants are fully immunized.
- Because of the success of vaccines in preventing disease in the United States, parents are often unaware that their children are at risk for so many serious and life-threatening diseases.
- Vaccine-preventable diseases are at an all-time low in the United States. However, these diseases still exist and continued vaccination is necessary to protect everyone from potential outbreaks.
- Immunizations are extremely safe. Vaccines are thoroughly tested before being approved for public use and monitored carefully by doctors, researchers, and public health officials.
- Vaccines not only prevent disease, they reduce the costs associated with missed time from work, doctor visits, and hospitalizations.

**Join us for our local kick-off
of this national event!**

**New Britain Rock Cats
Immunization Records Night**

Tuesday, April 22, 2008 Gates open at
5:35 PM

The first pitch will be thrown out by a local pediatrician! Look for the New Britain Immunization Program table at New Britain Stadium for more info about childhood diseases and how to prevent them.

Contact the New Britain Health Department at
(860) 612-2777 for further information.

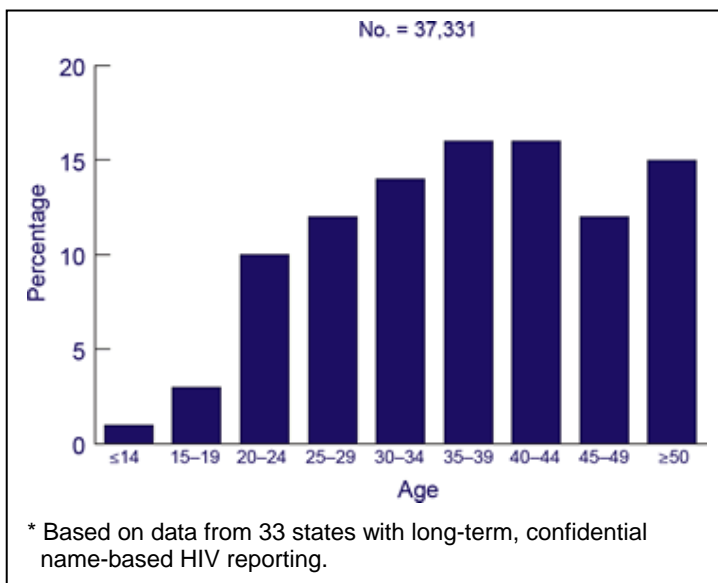
HIV/AIDS among Persons Aged 50 and Over

The number of persons aged 50 years and older living with HIV/AIDS has been increasing in recent years. This increase is partly due to highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART), which has made it possible for many HIV-infected persons to live longer, and partly due to newly diagnosed infections in persons over the age of 50. As the US population continues to age, it is important to be aware of specific challenges faced by older Americans and to ensure that they get information and services to help protect them from infection.

THE NUMBERS

In 2005, persons aged 50 and over accounted for

- 15% of new HIV/AIDS diagnoses
- 24% of persons living with HIV/AIDS (increased from 17% in 2001)
- 19% of all AIDS diagnoses
- 29% of persons living with AIDS
- 35% of all deaths of persons with AIDS



Persons over the age of 50 may have many of the same risk factors for HIV infection that younger persons have. Many older persons are sexually active but may not be practicing safer sex to reduce their risk for HIV infection. Some may be less knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS and therefore less likely to protect themselves. Many do not perceive themselves as at risk for HIV and do not get tested.

CDC. [HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report, 2005](#). Vol. 17.

The Division of Environmental Health

Rat Facts

For some people, rats can make good pets. If they are unwanted however, rats can be pests. They pollute food, spread disease, and cause damage by gnawing. Rats are most active at night. If they are seen during the day, there is a good chance there are more around your home. Rats eat all types of food, including human and pet food.

Types Of Rats

Roof Rats: Roof rats are not a common type of rat found in Connecticut. They like to climb, rather than burrow, and they live above ground. They are gray or brown in color.

Norway Rats: Norway rats are commonly found in homes in Connecticut. They prefer to burrow outside and are bigger than roof rats. They come in a wide range of colors.

Rat Diseases

Rats carry and spread diseases that can harm humans and other animals:

Plague: People can be infected with plague from fleas that feed on infected rats, or from being bitten by an infected rat.

Food poisoning: Eating food that has been polluted with rat urine or droppings can cause food poisoning.

Rat-bite fever: A bite from an infected rat can cause rat-bite fever.

Parasites: Some rats can carry tapeworms.

Signs Of Rat Activity

The most common signs of a rat infestation in your home are:

- Stripped bark from plants and trees
- Piles of cut snail shells hidden under plants or piles of wood
- Sounds in the attic, floor, and walls
- Rat droppings in garages, storage buildings or other sheltered areas
- Rub marks caused by greasy rat fur
- Damaged food containers

Rats cannot live without food, water, or shelter. You can get rid of rat problems by following these simple steps!

Step One: Rodent-proof your home and storage buildings!

- Check the outside of your house for holes or gaps the size of a quarter or larger
- Repair all openings using rodent proof materials: 1/4 inch 18-22 gauge wire hardware cloth

Install metal weather stripping under doors to remove gaps

Step Two: Remove food sources from your property!

- Keep garbage cans covered at all times
- Pick fruit, nuts and vegetables as they ripen, and throw away or compost fallen fruit on the ground
- Feed pets during daylight hours only, and remove uneaten food right away

Avoid storing food in garages and storage sheds at night unless in rat-proof covered metal containers

Step Three: INSIDE your home use traps, *not* poison bait!

- Poisoned rats may die inside walls or attics, creating odors and attracting flies
- Use snap traps when rats are inside your home
- Place traps at entry points, or where you have seen rat droppings
- Use **CAUTION** when placing traps around children or pets
- Bait the traps with peanut butter or the food the rats have been eating
- Tie down traps to prevent injured rats from dragging the traps away and dying inside your walls
- Check traps at least twice a week

Step Four: OUTSIDE your home use poison bait!

- **Keep bait away from children and pets.**
- Rodent proof your home **BEFORE** using poison bait

- *Always read the label and follow directions when using poisons!*
- Multi-dose, anti-coagulant poisons are the most effective, and the rat may need to feed on the bait for several days for it to work
- Place poison bait in an enclosed bait station, where rats and their droppings have been found
- Make sure bait is in a protected area, such as under woodpiles or thick vegetation where rats may be hiding
- Check bait stations twice a week and add bait when necessary
- Place dead rats in sealed plastic bags and put them in the trash

Move to step five when rats stop eating bait

Step Five: Get rid of rat habitat!

- Remove all trash and debris
- Stack woodpiles, lumber and household items at least 18 inches above the ground, 12 inches away from fences and walls
- Trim trees, bushes and vines to at least 4 feet away from the roof
- Remove heavy vegetation such as ivy, bougainvillea and pyracantha away from buildings and fences

Thin vegetation to allow daylight in and remove rat hiding places

For More Information On Rats Or Other Vectors Contact: (860) 612-1600

The Environmental Health Division of the New Britain Health Department is located in New Britain City Hall – 3rd Floor.

