

# National Public Health Week 2013

## Public Health is ROI: Save lives, Save Money

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In 1995 President Bill Clinton declared the first week in April as National Public Health Week. Ever since, communities across the nation have observed it by recognizing the contributions of public health. Each year, the theme changes but the common focus is always on public health and prevention.

This year, we are focusing on raising awareness about the role of public health and prevention in our lives, our health and our pocketbooks. The theme for 2013 is "Public Health is ROI: Save Lives, Save Money." As we know, in the business world, ROI means "Return on Investments." But what does this mean to public health? Research shows that by supporting evidenced-based public health programs, we will see the results in healthier communities and reduced cost in treating diseases. Consider these facts as provided by the American Public Health Association (APHA):

- Routine childhood immunizations save 9.9 million in direct health care costs, save 33,000 lives and prevent 14 million cases of disease.

- A \$52 investment in a child safety seat prevents \$2,200 in medical costs, resulting in a return of \$42 for every \$1 invested.

- A \$12 investment in a child's bike helmet can prevent \$580 in medical costs, a return of \$48 for every \$1 invested.

- The cost of providing dental care for children enrolled in Medicaid and living in communities without fluoridation is twice as high as for those children who receive the oral health benefits of drinking water fluoridation.

- For every \$1 invested in workplace wellness programs, medical costs drop by more than \$3.

-The benefits of tobacco cessation programs range from 86 cents to more than \$2.50 for every \$1 invested.

I think you get the point! Poor health comes at a big price - for us all. But good health does not happen by chance. It is connected to the environment in which we live and the resources and health care accessibility available in our communities. This is the where public health prevention programs have their impact.

It is often said that public health is invisible. Most people do not know what it is or how it impacts their lives. We need public health for so many reasons: to monitor Lyme Disease and West Nile virus and implement prevention strategies; to enforce food safety regulations to prevent food-borne illness outbreaks; to prepare the community for emergencies; to provide access to vaccines; and so much more.

There are big challenges ahead. Federal and state budget cuts mean many public health agencies and programs are being cut. These cuts compromise the health of our communities and leave us more vulnerable to illness and injury as well as higher medical costs. Let's stand up for the value of public health and prevention in our lives. Help spread the word that investing in public health is an investment in our nation's health and future.

You too have the power to make positive changes in your own life and your community. Advocate for what your community needs to stay healthy, such as more bike lanes, sidewalks in good repair and safe play areas. Making small changes in your daily life, such as eating healthy, avoiding tobacco products, and staying up to date on recommended vaccinations, can make a big difference in helping you live a longer, healthier life.

(The above information was taken from [www.nphw.org](http://www.nphw.org) website.)

In recognition of National Public Health Week, the Andover Health Department is offering the following programs during the month of April:

-Thursday, April 11           Cholesterol Screening Day –

Call for details and appointment

-Saturday, April 27           Sharps Disposal Day

in conjunction with the Andover Police Dept./DEA  
Medication Disposal Day

West Elementary School   10-2pm

-Adults wishing to be vaccinated against Pneumonia and TdaP (tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis) can call for details and appointments.

-Blood Pressure Clinics are conducted every Wednesday at the Andover Senior Center from 2-3pm on a walk in basis.

-The Public Health Museum of Massachusetts, located in Tewksbury, is offering a week- long series of events April 1st-5<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Visit their website [www.publichealthmuseum.org](http://www.publichealthmuseum.org) or the Andover Health Department display at the Memorial Hall Library for a list of events that are free and open to the public.

