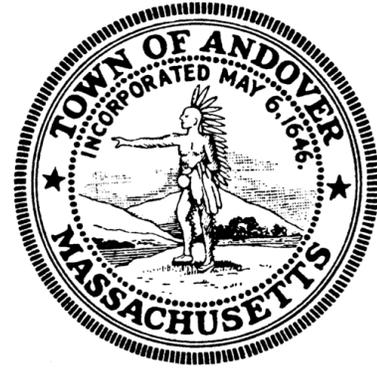


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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# Andover Health Division Shares 10 Important Public Health Achievements

ANDOVER -- To celebrate Public Health Week, the Andover Health Division is releasing a series of informative columns and articles highlighting the importance of the public health sector and all of the professionals who are a part of the field.

As the first installment in its National Public Health Week campaign, the Andover Health Division would like to share with residents the greatest achievements in public health throughout the 20th century.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently published its list of the 10 Greatest Achievements in Public Health since 2000. However, in 1999, the CDC published an essay in its Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) on the 10 Great Public Health Achievements of the 20th Century. The article highlighted how various achievements in the public health field greatly influenced life expectancy at birth, which had increased by 62 percent from 1900 to 1999.

"While it may be obvious to many people how much our lives have improved since the early 1900s thanks to advancements in medicine and technology, many people don't automatically think of that as an accomplishment by public health professionals," said Andover Director of Public Health Thomas Carbone. "These achievements are a testament to the hard work and dedication of those who work in public health, and I feel very strongly that people should be aware of that."

To this day, the following achievements and improvements in quality of life can be largely attributed to the work of the public health sector:

• **Vaccinations:** Several diseases have been prevented due to the development of vaccines and the improvement of vaccination programs throughout the world. Some examples include the Smallpox virus, which has been eliminated worldwide since 1979 and there is no longer a need to be immunized against it today. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), naturally acquired polio has been eliminated in all but three countries of the world. The University Of Michigan School Of Public Health reports that in 1920, more than 400,000 Americans were afflicted with Measles, and 7,000 of those people died. Although cases have declined, outbreaks of measles and mumps are still occurring. There are several challenges ahead with the increased complexity of new vaccines and schedules, but also with world travel and the spread of disease. Vaccines are our first line of defense to prevent illness, disability and death from preventable diseases for adults and children and vaccination efforts across the country have cut the risk of poor outcomes dramatically.

• **Motor Vehicle Safety:** The University Of Michigan School Of Public Health reports that until 1966, the number of fatalities associated with motor vehicle accidents increased annually. That same year, the Highway Safety Act and the Motor Vehicle Safety Act were adopted, which led to safety improvements including the use of seat belts, child safety seats, and better design of the vehicles in general including crumple zones, headrests, and shatter-resistant windshields. With each safety improvement, injuries and fatalities have continued to decrease.

• **Safer Workplaces:** The advent of the Industrial Revolution led to dangerous working conditions in many industries. Factory workers were often locked inside their work areas, which kept them from escaping when fires swept through their shops. Machine operators lost digits and limbs when their fingers failed to avoid cutting tools, and miners suffered from the ailments of “black lung” disease. The start of industrial hygiene techniques and the founding of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and other safety groups has vastly improved the health and safety of all workers.

• **Control of Infectious Diseases:** Clean water and improved sanitation have contributed to the control of infectious diseases. Infections such as typhoid and cholera transmitted by contaminated water were a major cause of illness and death in the United States in the early 20th century. Due to the continuous study of disease processes worldwide, there is a better understanding of how infectious diseases spread. Additionally, the discovery of antimicrobial therapy has been critical to successful public health efforts in controlling infections like tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases. As new diseases are identified, actions can be instituted to treat and decrease the spread of illnesses. New technology has allowed for a better understanding of disease processes and the development of better treatments.

• **Decline in Deaths from Coronary Heart Disease and Stroke:** A decline in deaths from coronary heart disease and stroke have resulted from risk-factor modifications like smoking cessation and blood pressure control, coupled with improved access to early detection and better treatment. Since 1972, death rates for coronary heart disease have decreased 51 percent. High blood pressure, cholesterol, diet, exercise and tobacco use have all been identified as risk factors for heart related diseases. Ways to reduce these risk factors have been identified through pharmaceutical intervention and health education and technology has allowed for better ways to diagnose, treat and otherwise address factors that could result in a fatal outcome earlier in the century.

• **Safer and Healthier Foods:** As refrigeration has improved, so has the slowing of food spoilage. In the early 1900s, most people kept their food cold by purchasing blocks of ice. Modern practices like mechanical refrigeration and pasteurization have led to a decrease in food-borne illness. Inspections of slaughterhouses and restaurants have improved sanitary conditions and faster, more reliable transportation has allowed us to obtain fresh fruits and vegetables year round.

• **Healthier Mothers and Babies:** The University of Michigan School of Public Health reports that between 600 and 900 mothers died in the early 20th century for every 100,000 live births. As

prenatal care and medication improved, so did the outcome for both mother and infant at birth. Improved hygiene and nutrition, availability of antibiotics, greater access to healthcare, and technological advances in maternal and neonatal medicine have resulted in healthier mothers and babies.

- **Family Planning and Reproductive Health:** Family planning and reproductive health services have altered the social and economic roles of women and families. Access to these services has provided health benefits such as smaller family size and longer intervals between the birth of children, increased opportunities for pre and post-natal counseling and screening, and fewer infant, child, and maternal deaths. Other benefits include the use of contraceptives to prevent pregnancy and transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted illnesses, routine screening and treatment for certain cancers and diseases, as well as reproductive health such as cervical, breast or uterine cancer.

- **Fluoridation of Drinking Water:** Adding fluoride to drinking water has improved the dental health of the nation, which in turn has improved our overall health. Research has shown that healthy teeth have a direct correlation with a healthy heart. By directly adding fluoride to the drinking water supply, children have received the benefit of stronger teeth and a decrease in tooth decay which can damage teeth and gums.

- **Recognition of Tobacco as a Health Hazard:** Over the years, research has shown that there is a direct correlation between tobacco use and certain cancers such as lung and oral cancers. Tobacco use can increase the risk of developing other cancers and is tied to other heart conditions as well as lung disease, emphysema, increased incidence of asthma with second hand exposure, accidents and fires. With the implementation of the Surgeon General's Warning in 1964, the United States has made tremendous strides in decreasing the use of tobacco and nicotine products and is continuing work to keep tobacco out of the hands of children.

For more information about public health and National Public Health Week, visit the [NPHW website](#).

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