
Health Offices of Tantasqua & Union 61

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NEWSLETTER

Brimfield Elementary Brookfield Elementary Holland Elementary Burgess Elementary (Sturbridge) Wales Elementary Tantasqua Junior High Tantasqua High School Tantasqua High School Tech. Division



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How to Talk With Your Child About Social Justice, Bias, Racism & Protest

The School Health Office Team recognizes the recent turbulent national events may be causing your children to ask questions, feel anxious or afraid, or to not be able to participate in their daily routine. Our schools strive to achieve the following statement: **All students, regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or homelessness, have equal access to the general educational program and the full range of any occupational/vocational education programs offered by the district.**



Dr. Anderson and Dr. Douge write that “children learn about racial differences and racial bias from an early age and learn from their first teachers—their parents—how to deal with and react to these differences. The process of learning about and understanding racial bias is a lot like learning a new language. There is a critical early learning period as well as a later window where learning is much harder. As early as 6 months, a baby's brain can notice race-based differences; By ages 2 to 4, children can internalize racial bias; By age 12, many children become set in their beliefs—giving parents a decade to mold the learning process, so that it decreases racial bias and improves cultural understanding.

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There are strategies that parents can use to help their children understand racial bias:

- Children take cues from their parents. It is important to talk to your children calmly and stay factual and acknowledge that racial differences and bias exist.
- Confront your own bias and model how you want your children to respond to others who may be different than them.
- Encourage your children to challenge racial stereotypes and racial bias by being kind and compassionate when interacting with people of all racial, ethnic, and cultural groups.

At the same time, it's important that we don't hide our emotions from children, especially when the subject is so important. Let them know that you're sad or angry, says Dr. Hameed, and acknowledge that it's good to be upset by injustice, as long as it doesn't stop you from working to make it better. That way, you'll leave your children with a clear lesson about the family values you want to pass on to them. Please utilize the following resources to guide your conversations when your child needs your support in understanding current events. [How to talk to your children about protests and racism](#); [Talking to Children About Racial Bias](#)

Summer Sun Safety Tips [CDC](#)

- Apply a thick layer of broad spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher at least 15 minutes before going outside, even on cloudy or overcast days. Reapply sunscreen at least every 2 hours and after swimming, sweating, or toweling off.
- Seek shade, especially during midday hours. Umbrellas, trees, or other shelters can provide relief from the sun. Be extra careful around surfaces that reflect the sun's rays, like snow, sand, water, and concrete.
- Wear sun protection gear like a hat with a wide brim and sunglasses to protect your face and eyes. Your eyes are equally vulnerable to sun damage. Wear a long-sleeved shirt and pants or a long skirt for additional protection when possible.



Discourage indoor and outdoor tanning. Indoor and outdoor tanning often begin in the teen years and continue into adulthood. Children may be more receptive than teens listening about the dangers of tanning, so start the conversation early, before they start “wanting to get a tan.” There’s no such thing as a safe tan.

- Help preteens and teens understand the dangers of tanning so they can make healthy choices.
- Talk about avoiding tanning, especially before special events like homecoming, prom, or spring break.
- Discourage tanning, even if it's just before one event like prom. UV exposure adds up over time.

Indoor tanning—

- Exposes users to intense levels of UV rays, a known cause of cancer.
- Does not offer protection against future sunburns. A “base tan” is actually a sign of skin damage.
- Can spread germs that can cause serious skin infections.
- Can lead to serious injury. Indoor tanning accidents and burns send more than 3,000 people to the emergency room each year.

What is LGBTQ Pride Month?



June is the commemorative month recognizing the sweeping impact that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) individuals, advocates and allies have on history in the United States and around the globe, according to the [Library of Congress](#). The month of June was chosen for LGBTQ Pride Month to commemorate a pivotal moment for the LGBTQ community. Police raided the Stonewall Inn (a gay club) in New York City on June 28, 1969. Subsequent protests and riots were a "tipping point" for the gay liberation movement in the United States and paved the way for the modern fight for LGBTQ rights.

The LGBTQ flag is prominently displayed throughout the month. Gilbert Baker, an American artist, gay rights activist and U.S. Army veteran, created the rainbow flag in 1978 as a new symbol for the gay and lesbian political movement at the suggestion of his friends and colleagues. According to [Baker's website](#), the colors of the rainbow LGBTQ flag each have a meaning: red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sunlight, green for nature, blue for harmony and violet for spirit.

LGBTQ Pride Month events draw millions of participants from around the world each year. This year's LGBTQ Pride Month will be celebrated differently due to the coronavirus pandemic but like all large gatherings, LGBTQ Pride Month parades and marches planned for June have been canceled. The LGBTQ community and allies will still be able to connect virtually thanks to an abundance of [online events](#).

The following are resources for LGBTQ youth and their families:

[PFLAG](#) is the first and largest organization for LGBTQ people, their parents, families, and allies.

[GLSEN](#) was founded by a group of Boston educators in 1990. Today, GLSEN's national network is more than 1.5 million strong with students, families, educators and education advocates working to create safe schools for LGBTQ students.

[Safe Homes](#) is a program supporting LGBTQ and questioning young people between the ages of 14-23. The group is led by youth peer leaders, professional staff, and volunteers who offer support, resources, and opportunities for socialization in a safe and nurturing environment.

Mosquito Borne Illnesses



Most species of mosquitoes in the United States are harmless, but some can spread viruses that make you sick and cause death in rare cases. The CDC states that preventing mosquito bites is the most effective way to avoid viruses. In Massachusetts, mosquitoes can cause viruses such as Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and West Nile Virus (WNV).

What is EEE?

[Eastern equine encephalitis](#) (EEE) is a rare but serious disease caused by a virus. The EEE virus most often infects birds, sometimes showing no signs of infection. Mosquitoes then become infected when they bite infected birds. Although humans and several other types of mammals (particularly horses and llamas) can become infected, they do not spread the disease. EEE is generally spread to humans through the bite of a mosquito infected with the virus. EEE can cause severe illness and possibly lead to death in any age group; however, people under age 15 are at particular risk.

How common is EEE in Massachusetts?

Families should remember that contracting EEE is very rare, even during peak years. Since the virus was first identified in Massachusetts in 1938, fewer than 100 cases have occurred. Over 60% of those cases have been from Plymouth and Norfolk counties. Outbreaks of EEE usually occur in Massachusetts every 10-20 years. These outbreaks will typically last two to three years.

What are the Symptoms and Treatment of EEE?

Symptoms of EEE generally occur four to 10 days after a person has been infected and include:

- high fever.
- headache.
- tiredness.
- nausea/vomiting.
- neck stiffness.
- Sensitivity to light.
- Seizures.

What is West Nile Virus?

[West Nile Virus](#) (WNV) is a mosquito-borne illness and has been found in a variety of bird species. Some birds such as crows and jays may become sick and die from the virus. The

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virus is spread to people through infected mosquitoes. Mosquitoes become infected when they bite birds that have the virus. Monitoring and testing dead birds is one way the state detects the presence of WNV within a community. There is no evidence of a person becoming infected from handling a dead or live bird. However, individuals are encouraged to wear gloves if doing so.

How Common is WNV in Massachusetts?

WNV is a nationally notifiable disease and is the leading cause of mosquito borne illness in the continental United States.

What are the Symptoms and Treatment of WNV?

Most individuals (8 out of 10) will not develop symptoms. Approximately 20% of individuals will develop a fever accompanied by the following symptoms:

- Headache
- Body aches
- Joint Pain
- Vomiting/diarrhea
- Rash

Most people with these symptoms will recover completely, however fatigue and weakness may persist for months.

Approximately 1 in 150 individuals will develop a severe illness such as encephalitis or meningitis affecting the central nervous system. Symptoms may include the following:

- High fever
- Headache
- Neck stiffness
- Stupor/disorientation/coma
- Tremors/convulsions
- Muscle weakness/numbness/paralysis
- Vision loss

Some effects to the central nervous system might remain permanent. Individuals over 60 years of age and those with certain medical conditions are at greater risk for developing a severe illness. Recovery may take several weeks or months. Approximately 1 in 10 individuals who develop severe illness affecting the central nervous system die.

How can I learn more about EEE and WNV?

[Routine mosquito testing](#) in Massachusetts is typically reported June–October and is available to the public. The Department of Public Health will conduct early season surveillance activities to assess the risk of EEE and WNV for the 2020 season. Visit the MDPH website over the summer and fall months for updated mosquito testing information and the number of positive EEE and WNV cases reported.

There are no approved human vaccines or specific antiviral treatments for EEE or West Nile infections. Patients with suspected EEE or WNV disease should be evaluated by a healthcare provider.

Preventing Mosquito Bite Viruses In Massachusetts

The [CDC](#) and [Massachusetts Department of Public Health](#) recommend the following guidelines to help prevent mosquito bites:

1. Do not leave standing water in your yard. Mosquitoes breed in 14 days and only require a very small amount of water. Water that accumulates around your yard should be dumped.
2. Avoid allowing mosquitoes in your house by utilizing screens (ensuring they are intact) and keeping outside doors shut.
3. When used as directed, [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) recommended insect repellents are proven safe and effective, even for pregnant and breastfeeding women. Use Insect repellent with one of these active ingredients: DEET, Picaridin, IR3535, Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE), Para-menthane-diol (PMD), 2-undecanone and re-apply as directed.
4. Cover up by wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants, and avoid wearing dark colored clothing when outdoors because they attract bugs. Do not spray repellent on skin under clothing.
5. If you are also using sunscreen, apply sunscreen first and insect repellent second.
6. When possible, avoid being outdoors between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active, however they can bite at any time.
7. Treat items, such as boots, pants, socks, and tents, with permethrin or buy permethrin-treated clothing and gear. Do not use permethrin products directly on skin.

Tips for babies & children

- Dress your child in clothing that covers arms and legs.
- Cover strollers and baby carriers with mosquito netting.
- When using insect repellent on your child:
 - Always follow label instructions.
 - Do not use products containing oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) or para-menthane-diol (PMD) on children under 3 years old.
 - Do not apply insect repellent to a child's hands, eyes, mouth, cuts, or irritated skin.
 - Spray insect repellent onto your hands and then apply to a child's face.



Natural insect repellents (repellents not registered with EPA)

- We do not know the effectiveness of non-EPA registered insect repellents, including some natural repellents.
- To protect yourself against diseases spread by mosquitoes, CDC and EPA recommend using an [EPA-registered insect repellent](#). Choosing an EPA-registered repellent ensures the EPA has evaluated the product for safety and effectiveness.

Play Dough Fun to Make with Your Children

Natural Dyes

To get started making your own playdough dye put veggies/fruits in a pot of water and bring to a boil for 10 minutes, then simmer for 10-30 minutes depending on how intense you want the color to be. For dark pink: 2 cups water plus 1 cup shredded beets. For light pink : 3 cups water, 1 cup tightly packed purple cabbage. For yellow/orange: Dissolve $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp turmeric in 1 cup warm water. You can also use a natural food coloring product. Optional: a few drops of essential oil for fragrance. Lavender essential oil is a good choice that is safe for children.



Basic Play Dough Recipe

Ingredients:

- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 cup salt
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup of naturally colored water (see above)

Instructions:

1. Mix flour, salt and cream of tartar in a medium-sized pot
2. Add oil and colored water and stir until ingredients are well blended.
3. Place the pot on the stove over low/medium heat. Cook the dough, stirring often, until begins to pull away from the sides of the pot (about 3-5 minutes)
4. Allow the dough to cool a little and then knead for a minute or so.
5. Store in an airtight container

Gluten-Free Dough Recipe

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup rice flour
- 1/2 cup non-GMO cornstarch or arrowroot powder
- 1/2 cup salt
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup of naturally colored water (see above)

Instructions:

1. Mix flour, cornstarch/arrowroot, salt and cream of tartar in a medium-sized pot
2. Add oil and colored water and stir until ingredients are well blended.
3. Place the pot on the stove over low/medium heat. Cook the dough, stirring often, until begins to pull away from the sides of the pot (about 3-5 minutes)
4. Allow the dough to cool a little and then knead for a minute or so.
5. Store in an airtight container

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The Nurses of Tantasqua & Union 61 District are here to support all of our students and families regardless of race, religion, creed, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression.

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