



Town of Darien

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Health Department

Annual Report 2016 – 2017

The mission of the Health Department is to prevent disease and illness by promoting a safe community and healthy environment for all residents and visitors while upholding public health based regulations that protect the quality of life. It is the Department's goal to offer progressive public health programs and initiatives as well as timely and accurate responses to questions or service requests pertaining to environmental and public health. Programs and initiatives addressed in 2016 – 17 include the following:

Beaches and Recreational Water Quality

The Health Department collected water samples at Pear Tree Point and Weed Beaches weekly from Memorial Day through Labor Day. The purpose of the testing was to ensure that the water quality conforms to the public health safety standards established by the Connecticut Department of Public Health. In addition to water sampling, this department monitors rainfall amounts during the season and has established a protocol of notifying the Parks and Recreation Department to close the beaches for swimming when more than one inch of rain occurs in a 24 hour period. This policy is consistent with that of other shoreline communities and is due to elevated bacteria levels that have been observed after rainfall.

Over the last year, (2016-17), as in the previous nine years, there were NO beach closures due to elevated bacteria counts. There were two days of swimming restrictions at town beaches due to rainfall events over one inch. The Beach HOTLINE (203-656-7323) provides up-to-date information regarding the status of our beaches during the summer months.

Water Quality Study of Goodwives River:

- In January, 2016, the Health Department began a DNA source tracking study, the purpose of which was to evaluate the sources of bacteria that impact Goodwives River after rainfall and assess the potential risk to public health. The study was completed in 2017 and while specific sources of bacteria were not found, human DNA was not recovered indicating that sewage is not the source of bacteria in the River.

Public Pools

- State law considers private clubs and condominium associations with swimming pools to be “public pools” and subject to annual permits and inspection by the Health Department. In Darien, there are ten locations with a total of sixteen public pools. All facilities were regularly inspected during the last year and found to be safe, meeting water quality standards and generally in excellent condition.

Complaint Investigations

The Health Department continues to respond to and resolve complaints involving restaurants, housing, heating, mold and mildew problems, noise, insects, rodent infestations, trash, drinking water concerns, drainage, blighted properties, neighborhood odors, pollution concerns of all kinds and general nuisance situations. There were 48 such situations investigated in 2016-17.

Emergency Preparedness

The Department participates in monthly regional meetings to continue refining and improving cooperative relationships with surrounding communities in our plans for responding to emergency situations.

Flu Prevention Program

The Health Department offered four open clinics for flu vaccine; one at the Town Hall, two at the Senior Center, and the annual “Vote & Vax” held on Election Day in the Town Hall auditorium. In addition, we offer an on-line scheduler at www.darienhealth.com which residents can utilize to secure an appointment with our Public Health nurse. All vaccines offered are preservative free. The wide-spread availability of vaccine over the past few years has resulted in a reduced demand for our services but we will continue to provide vaccine as long as there is a demand.

	2016-17	2015- 16	2014-15
Doses of Vaccine administered	208	296	333

Food Protection Program

There are 158 permitted food service establishments in Darien, ranging from elegant banquet facilities to school cafeterias, seasonal “snack bars”, mobile vendors and temporary events. In 2016-17, the Department conducted 469 inspections of these facilities to ensure food safety.

The Department has revised its Rating system and now issues the letter grades of “A”, “C” or “C” for full service restaurants in conjunction with conditions found during each inspection. Ratings and complete inspection reports are available on-line at www.darienhealth.com.

The Table below provides a summary of inspections conducted and Ratings given for the past four years:

Year	2016 - 17	2015 - 16	2014 - 15	2013 - 14
Total Inspections	469	461	494	381
‘A’ or ‘GOOD’ Rating	214	232	274	226
‘B’ or ‘FAIR’	98	112	104	40
‘C’ or ‘POOR’	38	63	48	26
% ‘A’	61	57	64	77
% ‘C’	10	15	11	9

The Department offers two educational opportunities for food handlers employed in Darien food service facilities. There is a bi-monthly training program offered by Health Department staff and a multi-lingual on-line training program available on our website or at www.Darien.statefoodsafety.com . Both programs are intended to address deficiencies commonly found during inspections.

Health Needs Assessment

In the past year, the Department has completed and presented the first “health needs assessment” for the town since 2007. This provides essential guidance in determining the actual health needs of the community so policies may be considered and implemented to meet those needs. Among other issues, we have identified the need for an expanded role for the public health nurse who will assist in developing programs to address the following health concerns found in the assessment:

- Falls, the #1 EMS response category, especially among seniors
- STD education, the #1 reportable disease/illness in Darien
- Substance abuse which is a national concern
- Educational outreach for cancer screening.

Health Wellness and Prevention Programs

- Asthma: In conjunction with the “Putting on Airs” program and Stamford Hospital, this office offered home visits to residents seeking advice on addressing chronic asthma problems and eliminating asthma triggers in the home. In the past year, we have investigated and provided assistance to three families.
- Skin Cancer Prevention: “Don’t Fry Day” is a public information program focused on skin cancer prevention. Pamphlets (see the attachment) were designed and distributed to residents obtaining beach stickers, shellfishing permits and fishing licenses. Posters were placed at public pools, country clubs, as well as our parks and beaches.
- The Department participated in opioid abuse prevention activities and interventions throughout the community and organized on-going educational and public education forums. Three public forums were held at the Library to highlight the substance abuse impacts and prevention programs.

Mosquitos and Ticks

The State maintains two mosquito trapping stations in Darien for the collection and testing of mosquitos. As happens every summer, mosquitos trapped in Darien were found to be positive for West Nile Virus. There have been no reported illnesses from West Nile Virus in Darien. Additionally, there was no Zika activity found in the mosquitos tested, nor were there any reported positive cases of Zika in the community.

The Health Department accepts ticks from residents and submits them to the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station for testing at no charge. Last year, 163 ticks were submitted and 48 of those tested were found to be positive for the bacteria that cause Lyme disease. Since only deer ticks transmit Lyme Disease, no other ticks are tested. Also, if the lab determines the tick was not engorged with blood, testing is not done because Lyme Disease transmission could not have occurred. While higher than in past years, the percentage of positive ticks found in Darien is consistent with that found in neighboring communities. Free tick removal kits are available in Health Department offices.

Rabies

The Health Department and the Darien Animal Control Officer collaborate to collect and submit animals to the Connecticut State Department of Public Health Laboratory for testing if there is a possibility of human exposure to rabies. In 2016-17, nine animals were tested with no positive results. Testing animals suspected of having rabies is important since rapid treatment of the exposed individuals is completely effective in preventing an otherwise fatal illness.

Radon

Free Radon test kits with advisory information on the risks posed by radon continue to be available to Darien residents. While five years of test results do not indicate any “hotspots” or areas of concern in town, residents are advised to test their homes during the heating season every few years. In 2016-17, twenty-five (25) kits were distributed, with four locations found to have slightly elevated radon levels. Guidance for remediation is always provided as needed.

Recreational Shellfishing

The Health Department issued 65 Annual Permits to individuals for recreational shellfishing in 2016-17 as compared to 51 issued the previous year. Shellfishing rules and guidelines together with maps of approved shellfishing areas are provided to permit holders. The telephone HOTLINE (203-838-9807) provides information regarding any shellfish bed closures due to contaminated waters or excessive precipitation.

Reportable Illnesses

A mandated responsibility of this department is to monitor reportable diseases and certain conditions as determined by the State Department of Public Health. Over the years, the most frequent laboratory reported condition has always been influenza. However, since 2015-16, sexually transmitted diseases, especially Chlamydia, have become the number one reportable condition, most commonly occurring in individuals between the ages of eighteen (18) and twenty-six (26).

For the past three years, the most commonly reported illnesses were:

	<u>2016-17</u>	<u>2015-16</u>	<u>2014-15</u>
1) Chlamydia (and other STDs).....	25	30	23
2) Influenza.....	10	12	50
3) Campylobacteriosis.....	5	8	9
4) Hepatitis C.....	5	4	17
5) Lyme	2	3	11

Reduced reports of influenza in recent years may be due to the availability of vaccines at local pharmacies, and because physicians are performing diagnostic testing in their offices without utilizing outside laboratories that are required to report results. Similarly, Lyme Disease reports are very low, likely due to in-office diagnosis and the lack of confirmatory laboratory testing.

Salons

There are currently 27 permitted facilities in Town which are inspected at least twice a year by Health Department personnel. Customers and clients should take note of the “Certificate of Inspection” issued by this Department which signifies the establishment conforms to health department requirements. Inspection reports for each facility are now available on-line at www.darienhealth.com .

Septic Systems and Private Wells

Many properties in Darien have on-site wastewater disposal (septic systems) and potable water supply systems (wells). The Health Department follows a detailed plan review and inspection process whenever homes with septic systems and/or wells are built, remodeled or reconstructed. In the past year, the Health Department performed soil testing to determine site suitability for new or replacement septic systems at 18 sites, reviewed 37 engineered plans and issued permits for the installation of 17 septic systems. Evaluations of site suitability for additions were performed for 48 locations, while 9 well drilling permits, mostly for geothermal wells, were issued.

Social Media

The Health Department website <http://darienhealth.com> is regularly revised and updated to serve as a timely informational resource for Darien residents. The website features current information on health issues, emergency preparedness and application forms for permits as well as the “scheduler” for flu shot appointments with our Public Health Nurse. Food service establishment inspection reports and ratings are available for on-line viewing as are the inspection reports for salons. In addition, “Twitter” is a regular component of our social media campaign (www.twitter.com/darienhealth).

Unwanted Prescription Medication Disposal Program: “A Ton of Drugs!”

Darien began participating in the unwanted drug disposal program in 2010 and installed the 24/7 collection box in the Police Department lobby in 2012. In June of 2016, the 2000 pound mark for disposed medication was reached in Darien. That is a “*Ton of Drugs!*” safely disposed that could have ended up in the wrong

hands or been improperly discarded. We currently collect and dispose of approximately 50 pounds of unwanted meds each month. Outreach programs to better inform the public that this service exists as well as meeting with local pharmacies and doctors' offices to provide additional information to customers and patients are on-going.

(Submitted 01-31-18 by D. Knauf)

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