



# Town of Darien

## Health Department

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### Annual Report 2018 – 2019

The mission of the Health Department is to prevent disease and illness by promoting a safe community and healthy environment for residents and visitors while upholding public health based regulations that protect the quality of life. It is the goal of the Department 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 2018 – 19 include the following:

#### Beaches and Recreational Water Quality

The Health Department collects water samples at Pear Tree Point and Weed Beaches weekly from Memorial Day through Labor Day. The purpose of the testing is to ensure that the water quality conforms to the public health safety standards established by the US EPA and 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 preemptively close the beaches for swimming when more than one inch of rain occurs in a 24-hour period since high rainfall amounts routinely results in elevated bacteria levels.

Over the last year, there were NO beach closures due to elevated bacteria counts, but there were three days of preemptive closures due to rainfall. The Beach HOTLINE (203-656-7323) provides up-to-date information regarding the status of our beaches during the summer months.

#### Public Pools

➤ State law considers private clubs and condominium associations with swimming pools to be “public pools” 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 are regularly inspected when open and have been found to be safe, meeting water quality standards and are generally in excellent condition.

#### Complaint Investigations

The Health Department 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 36 such situations investigated in 2018-19.

#### Emergency Preparedness

The Department participates in monthly regional meetings to continue refining and improving cooperative relationships with surrounding communities to coordinate responding to emergency situations while maintaining an updated plan for responding to any local public health emergency in our community.

#### Flu Prevention Program

In the past year, 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 addition, we offer an on-line scheduler at [www.darienhealth.com](http://www.darienhealth.com) which residents may utilize to secure an appointment with our Public Health nurse.

	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16
Doses of Vaccine administered	283	250	208	296

#### Food Protection Program

There are 160 permitted food service establishments in Darien, ranging from elegant banquet facilities to school cafeterias, seasonal “snack bars”, mobile vendors and temporary events. In 2018-19, the Department conducted 482 inspections of these facilities to ensure food safety.

The Department 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 posted at the facility and are available on-line. Rating forms posted at restaurants contain a “QR” code which is linked to our website to enable remote viewing of past inspection reports.

A table below provides a summary of inspection results and Ratings for the past five years:

	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15
<b>Total Inspections</b>	482	411	469	461	494
<b>'A' or 'GOOD' Rating</b>	204	140	214	232	274
<b>'B' or 'FAIR'</b>	114	86	98	112	104
<b>'C' or 'POOR'</b>	30	48	38	63	48
<b>% 'A'</b>	59	51	61	57	64
<b>% 'C'</b>	9	17	10	15	11

### **Hair, Nail and Personal Service Salons**

There are currently 34 permitted facilities in Town which are inspected at least twice a year by Health Department personnel. Inspection reports for each facility are now available on our website.

### **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. Public advisories to minimize exposure to mosquitos are issued when appropriate.

The Health Department accepts ticks from residents and submits them to the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station for testing at no charge. Last year, 24 of the 74 ticks tested were found to be positive for the bacteria that cause Lyme disease. The percentage of positive ticks found in Darien is consistent with that found in neighboring communities.

### **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. Last year, nine (9) bats were submitted for testing with all specimens negative for rabies. 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 several 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 the past year, twenty-five (25) tests were performed, with three locations found to have slightly elevated radon levels.

### **Recreational Shellfishing**

Last year, the Health Department issued 81 Annual Permits to individuals for recreational shellfishing as compared to 65 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.

### **Reportable Illnesses & Public Health Initiatives**

A mandated responsibility of this department is to monitor reportable diseases and certain conditions. Over the years, the most frequent reported condition has been influenza. However, since 2015-16, sexually transmitted diseases 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 four years, the most commonly reported illnesses were:

	<b>2018 - 19</b>	<b>2017- 18</b>	<b>2016- 17</b>	<b>2015- 16</b>
Sexually Transmitted Diseases	23	36	25	30
Influenza	22	4	10	12
Campylobacter	11	4	5	8
Hepatitis C	11	7	5	4
Lyme	12	3	2	3

Darien once again met the requirements for designation as a "HEARTSafe Community". Award criteria are population based and relate to the provision of cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training, the availability of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) throughout the community and for rapid response to emergency calls. AED locations in the community are identified on the Health Department website.

### **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 staff witnessed soil testing to determine site suitability for new or replacement septic systems at 24 sites, reviewed 37 engineered plans and issued permits for the installation of 12 septic systems. Evaluations of site suitability for building additions were performed for 36 locations, while 5 well drilling permits, mostly for geothermal wells, were issued.

### **Social Media**

The Health Department website [www.darienct.gov/health](http://www.darienct.gov/health) now features a Community Calendar highlighting local health and wellness programs as well as a section on "Breaking News" All permit application forms are available on-line. The Department also maintains a Twitter site ([www.twitter.com/darienhealth](http://www.twitter.com/darienhealth)) which provides timely information from the public health world.

### **Substance Abuse Prevention Programs**

The Department participates in substance misuse activities and interventions statewide as well as locally. Two public forums were held at the Library to highlight the substance abuse impacts and present prevention programs.

(Submitted 02-14-20 by D. Knauf)