

Monthly Newsletter

December 2025

SOUTHCOAST



What to Expect

Happy Holidays!

In this month's newsletter, we are highlighting:

- Achievements made by staff members at the Massachusetts Health Officers Association (MHOA) Conference
- How to safely decorate for the holidays
- Preventing falls during winter months
- Lastly, we have an update from our Epidemiologist on the rise of influenza cases and proving how vaccines do not cause autism

Upcoming Events

Thursday, December 11, 2025

- Swansea Community Blood Drive
 - 11:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
 - American Legion Post 303 (Event Room)
 - 73 Ocean Grove Ave Swansea, MA 02777

To sign up for the Swansea Blood Drive, go to RedCrossBlood.org and enter: SWANSEA to schedule an appointment

Monday, December 15, 2025

- Somerset Community Blood Drive
 - 12:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
 - Somerset Council on Aging (Main Hall)
 - 115 Wood St, Somerset, MA 02726

To sign up for the Somerset Blood Drive, go to RedCrossBlood.org and enter: SOMERSETCOA to schedule an appointment

Monday December 29, 2025

- Healthy Holiday Eating and Bingocize
 - 2pm
 - Seekonk Council on Aging
 - 540 Arcade Ave. Seekonk, MA 02771

Sign up is recommended for the Healthy Holiday Eating and Bingocize. To sign up, call the COA [\(508\) 336-8772](tel:5083368772)

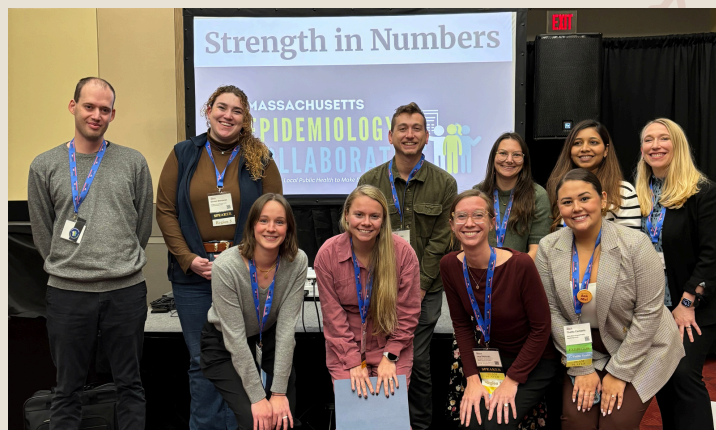
✦ Last Month's Highlights ✦

Massachusetts Health Officers Association (MHOA) Conference

Several of our SCPHC staff attended MHOA this past month in Plymouth, MA. Alongside other members of the Massachusetts Epidemiology Collaborative, our Regional Epidemiologist presented the Massachusetts Local Public Health Data Sharing Playbook, a first-of-its-kind Massachusetts-specific toolkit created by and for local public health. Local health departments across Massachusetts face challenges with sharing and presenting data in clear, consistent, and privacy-protecting ways. This playbook was designed to provide a guide for local public health to promote continuity, coordination, and help strengthen public trust in health data. The group held an interactive session where attendees worked through a real-world example, used the tools, and contributed feedback for future iterations.



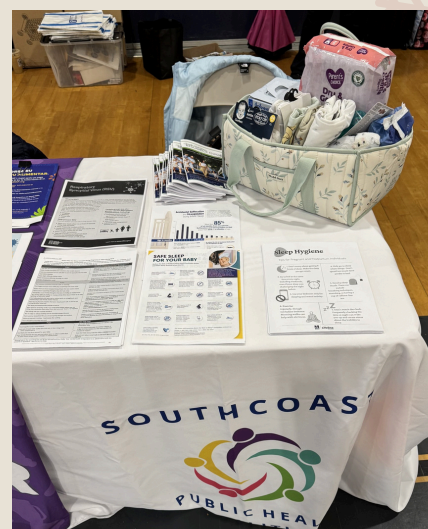
Members of the Southcoast Public Health Coalition staff



Members of the Massachusetts Epidemiology Collaborative

4th Annual Community Baby Shower

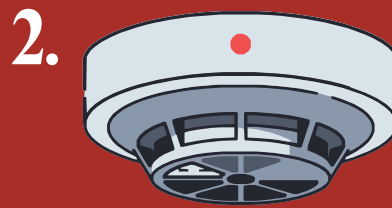
Last month, our public health specialist attended the 4th Annual Community Baby Shower, hosted by Fall River WIC. This event provided donations and resources to 108 expectant mothers in Fall River. Many organizations attended this event and provided the mothers with diapers, clothing, playpens, car seats, etc. The public health specialist provided a baby basket with newborn necessities, along with educational resources about postpartum depression, safe sleeping habits, and RSV.



1. Artificial trees are safer than real trees.



However, if you do have a real tree, make sure it is fresh and watered **DAILY**. Dry trees can cause a fire.

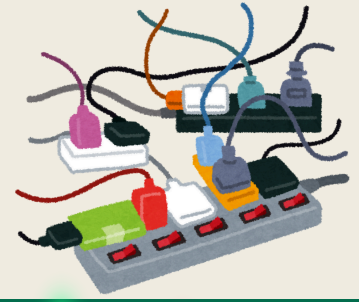


Check your smoke detector battery.

4. Never leave a burning candle unattended. Make sure candles are far from flammable objects.



3. **Never** overload extension cords, circuits, or electrical sockets.



5. Before putting up lights, make sure that there are no broken bulbs or frayed wires.



6. Never leave cooking or baking unattended.



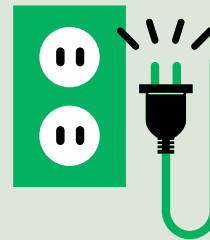
7. Holiday plants (poinsettias) are dangerous for animals. Keep the plants far away from them.



THE 12 DAYS OF HOLIDAY SAFETY



8. All decorations, space heaters, and tree lights should be turned off when going to sleep or leaving the house.



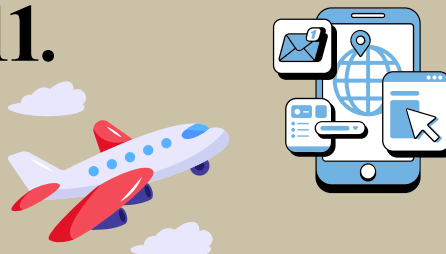
9. Never throw wrapping paper in the fireplace. Place wrapping paper in a trash bag and keep it far away from heat sources.



10. Proper maintenance of woodburning fireplaces will prevent accidents.



11. If you are traveling this holiday season, do not overshare on social media.



12. **NEVER** drink and drive.



Get home safely!

Fall Prevention

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Be careful when walking!

- Find the safest route to your location by walking on clean walkways
- If there is snow and ice, try to walk around it, rather than through it
- Dark areas on the pavement could be black ice
- To be safe, assume that all dark and wet areas are slippery, and avoid them
- Avoid carrying heavy items that could affect your balance
- Hands free is best! Put all of your items in a backpack so that you can stay balanced
- Do not use your phone while walking
- If you use the bus, make sure to use the front door to enter and exit, as the bus is lowered and it is safer
- Be careful entering and exiting your car. Hold onto the car door for additional support

Shoes

- Wear winter boots/ shoes that have a good grip

Surrounding Surfaces

- Do not walk on surfaces that look slippery
- Remove snow from your porch, steps, walkway, driveway, and near your car as soon as possible
- Make sure to salt areas near your house and car

Take Your Time and Plan Ahead

- Always check the weather ahead of time so that you can prepare
- If you are going somewhere, give yourself enough time to get there
- Always carry your phone with you as it can be used to call for help



Epi Update

December 1st, 2025

Top Highlights:

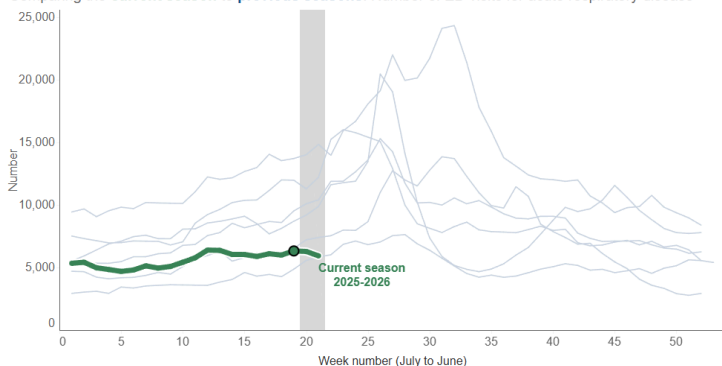
- Respiratory season has been off to a slow start this year, but influenza activity is beginning to rise across the country, including in our local communities. RSV is on the rise, particularly in young children.
- Vaccines do not cause autism. There is no link between taking Acetaminophen and autism.

National Trends

Nationally, respiratory virus activity is low across most of the country, however indicators of increased flu activity have been observed and will likely continue as we move into December, So far this season we're seeing H3N2 as the predominant strain and a new subclade circulating, this suggests we may have another big flu season.

COVID-19 and RSV levels are staying low but some states are seeing slight increases.

Comparing the **current season** to previous seasons: Number of ED visits for acute respiratory disease



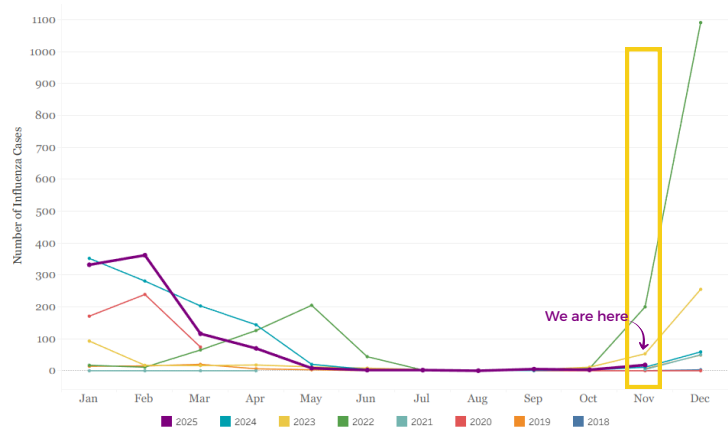
State Wide Trends

In Massachusetts, according to DPH dashboards, rates of respiratory illness continue to remain low to very low. Following national trends, COVID-19 and influenza cases remain low to very low while RSV has slowly started to trend upwards.

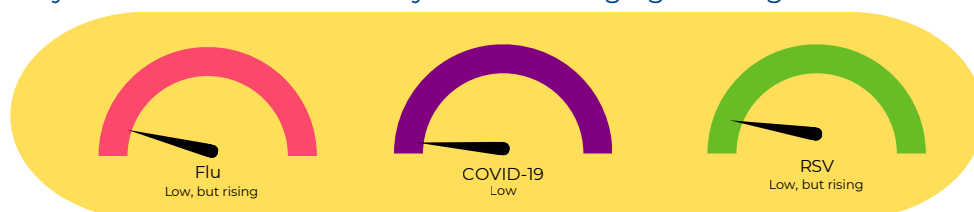
Local Trends

Locally, flu and COVID remain low in the Southcoast Public Health Coalition region. Compared to previous years, we're right on track with what we usually see this time of year. Typically, we begin to see a rise in cases towards Mid-late November, coinciding with holiday gatherings and cold weather keeping people indoors in close quarters.

Number of Influenza Cases per Month (2018-2025)



Now is the best time to get your seasonal vaccines. With RSV increasing, flu and COVID are likely to be right behind. It takes about two weeks for your body to build the antibodies after vaccination so try to vaccinate ahead of any events or large gatherings.



Vaccines Do Not Cause Autism

Vaccinating your child is safe, effective, and one of the most important things you can do for their health. Vaccinations do not cause autism.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that is caused by differences in the brain and may impact communication and relationships. **There is no single known cause of autism.** However, scientists believe genetics, as well as biological and environmental factors, are contributors.

Studies across the globe confirm that:

- No link exists between vaccines and autism.
- The ingredients in vaccines do not cause autism.
- The immune response triggered by vaccines does not increase autism risk.

Acetaminophen Use During Pregnancy Does NOT Cause Autism

Research shows no link between acetaminophen during pregnancy and increased risk of autism or other intellectual disabilities.

- An untreated fever in pregnancy can cause significant harm to the pregnant person and the baby when acetaminophen is not taken as advised by a healthcare provider.
 - Other pain relievers, such as ibuprofen, are not recommended during pregnancy due to safety concerns.

Why Vaccinate?

Vaccines help...

Teach the immune system how to recognize a virus or bacteria so their body knows how to respond if they are exposed to germs.



Build long-term protection against diseases.

Protect your community: Protect others from germs that can spread easily.



● = Is infected
● = Has been vaccinated
● = At high risk for disease or has not been (fully) vaccinated.

If you have any questions or concerns about vaccinating your child, speak with your health care provider. You can also learn more about when and why your child should receive important vaccinations here:

[All About the AAP Recommended Immunization Schedule – HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org/About-the-AAP-Recommended-Immunization-Schedule)