

**March 2025**

## **Health Officer's Update**

As we transition from winter to spring, it's a great time to refresh our focus on key health issues in Montgomery County, Maryland, and at the state and national levels. While we welcome the warmer weather, it's important to stay vigilant about emerging health concerns that may affect our communities.

The measles outbreak continues to be of national concern, with over 140 cases reported across eight states as of February 2025. This represents a significant increase compared to the previous year, with 92% of the cases being associated with outbreaks.

The CDC and local health agencies are ramping up efforts to control this preventable disease through vaccination outreach. In the last week of February, a death due to measles was recorded in Texas. Learn more about that instance here: [A child is dead from measles. - by Katelyn Jetelina](#).

This is an unfortunate, preventable event and an important reminder of the efficacy of the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine during childhood. I encourage anyone who has yet to receive the MMR vaccine to get it. The current [CDC](#) guidance recommends children receive two (2) doses of the MMR vaccine:

- the first dose between 12 and 15 months
- the second between 4 and 6 years, (all MD students in public or private school are required to be vaccinated unless they have a medical contraindication or religious exemption).

Everyone at all ages is recommended to receive the MMR vaccine. Adults born before 1957 are presumed to be immune and do not need the vaccine. If you are unsure of your vaccination status check with your doctor.

In Montgomery County, we continue to closely monitor the spread of highly pathogenic H5N1 (Avian Influenza). While the risk to humans remains low, residents are again advised to avoid contact with dead birds and report any sightings of dead wild birds to animal control.

The [Maryland Department of Agriculture](#) recommends reporting these sightings or sudden increase in very sick birds by calling the MDA Animal Health Program at 410-841-5810 or after-hours to 410-841-5971.

If you suspect exposure, please consult your primary care provider for further assessment. You can see the latest CDC reports on cases [here](#). Three indoor domestic cats also tested positive for H5N1 in Oregon, after confirming the presence of H5N1 in the pet food they consumed (Wild Coast Raw and Northwest Naturals). It is recommended that persons refrain feeding household pets raw/uncooked pet food and milk currently.

Respiratory illness activity in Maryland remains in the VERY HIGH category. Influenza cases continue to affect a significant number of residents, and hospital visits related to respiratory conditions are still high. Nationally, the acute respiratory illness situation remains high, with emergency department visits still elevated for influenza and moderate for RSV. COVID-19-related visits are at a low level across the U.S., but influenza cases are expected to continue impacting healthcare systems for the near future.

Wastewater surveillance shows high levels of influenza A viral activity, moderate levels for COVID-19, and low levels for RSV. As we move into Spring, state health officials are emphasizing the need for continued vigilance and preventive measures, including masking, hand washing and vaccination for flu and COVID-19.

I also wanted to acknowledge the impact of the changes occurring with the new federal administration and wanted to share that WorkSource Montgomery has developed a Resource Hub in support of federal workers. It can be accessed here: [WorkSource Montgomery | SFWResources](#).

Relatedly, I spoke with Congressman Jamie Raskin about the potential impact of cuts to Medicaid. You can watch [here](#).

In March, there are several awareness initiatives of note:

- [International Women's History Month](#) kicks off early discussions about reproductive health, mental health, and preventive care for women. The theme for [International Women's Day](#)- March 8<sup>th</sup>, is #AccelerateAction for Women's Equality.
- [National Nutrition Month](#) emphasizes the importance of making informed food choices and promoting healthy eating habits. This year's theme, "Food Connects Us " also recognizes that food connects us to so many things, including our cultures, families and friends.
- [Endometriosis Awareness Month](#) is an initiative dedicated to increasing public knowledge and reducing the stigma surrounding this chronic medical condition where tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus, causing pain, infertility, and other health issues.
- [National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month](#). According to the American Cancer Society, colorectal cancer is the leading cause of death for men under 50, and the second leading cause of death for women in the same age group. Screening in individuals 45 years and older is encouraged, as early detection can significantly improve treatment outcomes.
- [National Sleep Awareness Week \(March 5-12\)](#) reminds us of the importance of quality sleep for overall health and well-being. This week is a time to highlight the importance of good sleep hygiene, healthy sleep habits and addressing sleep-related disorders.
- [Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month](#) brings attention to this chronic, autoimmune condition that affects the central nervous system, urging continued research and support for individuals living with MS.
- [Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month](#) raises awareness about developmental disabilities, promote inclusion, and highlight the achievements and contributions of individuals with disabilities.

As we move into Spring, staying informed and proactive about these health concerns will help ensure the continued well-being of our communities to make Montgomery County community a healthier, happier place to live, work, and play!



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