



The Health Buzz

The official newsletter of the United States Virgin Islands Department of Health

Our Mission: To reduce health risks, increase access to quality healthcare and enforce health standards.

Dengue Virus Hits the Territory



common symptoms include muscle pain and headache. Many people might not realize that they have been infected with the virus, as symptoms can be mild, lasting for several days to a week after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Others may be infected and have no symptoms.

The U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Health announced that there has been laboratory-confirmed dengue in the territory as of December 31, 2019. The Department urges the public to stay vigilant to mosquito control and protection measures.

At this point detected cases are low, but conditions are favorable for an outbreak in the territory. Territorial Epidemiologist Dr. Esther Ellis added that it is possible that more dengue cases than what is currently detected is occurring in the territory due to those that do not get tested or seek care. The Department is currently testing approximately 50 samples a week for Dengue, Chikungunya and Zika.

Dengue is spread primarily through the bite of an infected Aedes species (Ae. aegypti and Ae. albopictus) mosquito. The most common symptoms are fever, rash, joint pain, or red eyes. Other

The Department of Health offers free testing for mosquito viruses including dengue. If you suspect you might have dengue, see your doctor and they can submit a sample and suspect case notification to DOH for laboratory testing. The Department urges providers to be on the lookout for additional possible dengue cases.

The Department of Health encourages residents to take measures to ensure there are no mosquito breeding sites around their homes by removing debris and draining excess water from plant pots. There are simple steps everyone can take to protect themselves and their families from dengue and other mosquito-borne viruses by following the 4 D's of prevention:

1. Dress – wear protective clothing – long sleeves, long pants and light colors.
2. Drain – get rid of water

3. Defend – use repellent on exposed skin and treat clothes with one of several EPA-approved repellents.
4. Discuss – spread the word about the simple things you can do to make a difference.

For local information about the Dengue virus or to receive any of the Department of Health's free services, call the Department of Health Epidemiology Division at (340) 718-1311 or visit doh.vi.gov and our Facebook page, facebook.com/virginislandsDOH. For more general information about the Dengue virus call toll free: 1-800-CDC-INFO.

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New Year's Goal Setting Tips

This is the Year to Accomplish Those Resolutions!

Beginning a new year is such a hopeful time. Whether we break out an unblemished calendar or merely scroll over to the month of January on our smart phones, there's the sense of being given a fresh start every January 1st. We make notes, either mentally or on paper, of New Year's resolutions we're determined to accomplish. Yet, all too often, we stumble over the first steps of change and quietly retreat to old, unhealthy habits.

Write goals down and review them periodically

Resolutions that aren't written down are destined to fail quickly. So write them out, and not just anywhere. Keep your list of New Year's goals in a place where you will see them regularly, so you can review your progress and recommit on a consistent basis.

- Tape your goals to your bathroom mirror where you'll see them first and last thing every day.
- Take a photo of your goals and post them as your computer screensaver or as your smart phone wallpaper.

Create goals for different areas of your life

Sure, you may be most concerned that you get your finances in order, but how about those other areas of life? If you set one or two goals in each of them, you're bound to see a ripple effect in every area.

- Relationship goals
- Work goals
- Spiritual goals
- Health and Fitness goals
- Finance goals

Set goals that are realistic and attainable

While it would be great to lose 30 pounds, get out of debt, and get a new job that pays twice your salary in the coming New Year, you do want to



make sure that any resolutions you set are ones you can accomplish in twelve months. So instead of setting a huge goal that involves lots of steps, work on framing your resolutions as smaller goals that can be accomplished reasonably.

- Pay \$25 a week towards your smallest debt.
- Revise your resume and then begin to look for available jobs in your skill set.

Make goals that are measurable

In order to stick to your goals, you need to be able to see consistently that you're on the right track. The best way to do that is to set goals that can be measured again and again over short periods of time.

- Sit at the table with your children for breakfast at least five mornings a week. Instead of, I'll make more time for my family.
- Invite one friend out for coffee every other Wednesday evening. Instead of, I'll be better at keeping in touch with friends.
- Straighten the house for 15 minutes every day after dinner. Instead of I'll keep my house cleaner.

Create goals that can be accomplished with a partner

What are the main reasons New

Year's resolutions are so hard to fulfill? They're hard work and no one tends to notice if you give up on them! So, go ahead and change that by teaming up with a friend or spouse to accomplish a goal together. You're bound to have more fun when you're working together, and you won't be so tempted to give up if someone else is counting on you.

- Sign up for a fitness challenge at your local health club with a friend or group of friends.
- Swap off nights with your husband to check your kids' homework or read aloud to them from a favorite book.
- Agree to teach a Sunday school class with your best friend.

Reward yourself for achieving goals

Finally the pay off! You'll be much more inclined to set resolutions next year if you can remember the thrill and the reward of accomplishing your goal.

- Treat yourself to a night out after you accomplish your fitness challenge.
- Allocate a few dollars to savings each week you pay down a debt and do something fun with the savings when the debt is paid off.

SOURCE: <https://www.signupgenious.com/home/new-years-goal-setting-tips.cfm>

Knowing Symptoms of Thyroid Problems Can Lead to Early Treatment

A small butterfly-shaped gland in our throats, the thyroid, is responsible for regulating the body's metabolism, and when it's not functioning properly, it can cause health problems. According to the American Thyroid Association, up to 60 percent of people with a thyroid problem may not be aware of what's causing their symptoms.

It's important that patients are aware of symptoms associated with thyroid issues.

The thyroid produces three hormones. Two of these hormones regulate the body's metabolism, as well as build protein and muscles. If someone has a hypothyroid condition—an underactive thyroid—they may have symptoms such as an overall feeling of tiredness, sluggishness, mind fogginess and possibly hair loss.

Most people who are hypothyroid gain weight. By contrast, if the hormones are overproducing, it acts as a stimulant to the muscle and heart and nervous systems.

If someone has a hyperthyroid condition—or an overactive thyroid—they might feel nervous, warm, have a racing heart, sweat a lot and are likely losing weight. An overactive thyroid can lead to serious health issues including cardiac arrhythmia and a greater chance of stroke.

Thyroid conditions can be genetic, caused by antibodies made in the body or by the presence of overactive

DID YOU KNOW?

1 in 10 people suffer from a Thyroid disorder

1 in 8 women will develop a thyroid disorder during her lifetime

JANUARY IS THYROID AWARENESS MONTH

Nutrients for a Happy Thyroid

Iodine, L-Tyrosine, Selenium, Vitamin C

More than half of the people in America that suffer from a Thyroid disorder are undiagnosed

lumps in the thyroid. Additionally, people who have undergone radiation treatment may develop a thyroid condition. The popular low-carbohydrate ketogenic diets also can impact the production of thyroid hormones, particularly when the body is saturated by nutrients from foods like cabbage and soy.

A few common conditions of the thyroid include:
Graves' disease: Symptoms are those of hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid), in which the patient may experience inflammation of the thyroid gland. The patient also may have an inflammation of tissue around the eyes that causes a bulging appearance.

Hashimoto's Thyroiditis: This condition also causes an inflammation of the thyroid gland, leading to symptoms of hyperthyroidism. It is an autoimmune condition in which antibodies attack a thyroid enzyme. It can eventually cause a decline in the thyroid's ability to produce hormones, leading to hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid). It can cause complications in pregnancy or

difficulty in becoming pregnant.

Thyroid cancer: There are different types of thyroid cancer, but the most common is the slow-growing papillary thyroid cancer, which generally has a very strong outlook, particularly when it occurs in people younger than 45. The American Thyroid Association says about 64,000 people are expected to be diagnosed with thyroid cancer each year, compared with 240,000 breast cancer cases.

Talking to your primary care physician about any symptoms you may be having can lead to early detection of thyroid issues. There are simple blood tests that can screen thyroid hormone function and help detect problems that may be present before they become serious.

Primary care providers can screen patients for thyroid dysfunction right in their offices, and based on their hormone levels, a follow-up or referral can be made. Thyroid issues can be treated either with medication, radioactive iodine treatment, surgery or a combination of those treatments

Source: <https://www.thedacare.org/>

Cervical Cancer Health Awareness

January is Cervical Cancer Health Awareness Month, and the Virgin Islands Department of Health wants you to know that there's a lot you can do to prevent cervical cancer. Each year, more than 11,000 women in the United States get cervical cancer.

HPV (human papillomavirus) is a very common infection that spreads through sexual activity, and it causes almost all cases of cervical cancer. About 79 million Americans currently have HPV, but many people with HPV don't know they are infected.

You can lower your risk for cervical cancer by getting screened regularly, starting at age 21.

Screening Tests

Two tests help prevent cervical cancer or find it early—

- The Pap test (or Pap smear) looks for *precancers*, which are cell changes on the cervix that might become cervical cancer if they are not treated appropriately.
- The human papillomavirus (HPV) test looks for the virus that can cause these cell changes.

Screening Options

You should get your first Pap test at age 21. If your test result is normal, you can wait three years for your next test.

If you're 30 years old or older, you have three options—

- You can continue getting a Pap test only. If your test result is normal, you can wait three years for your next test.
- You can get an HPV test only. If your test result is normal, you can wait five years for your next test.
- You can get both an HPV and Pap test together. If your test results are normal, you can wait five years for your next tests.

HPV Vaccine

The HPV vaccine protects against the types of HPV that most often cause cervical cancers. HPV can also cause other kinds of cancer in both men and women.

- HPV vaccination is recommended for preteens aged 11 to 12 years, but can be given starting at age 9.
- HPV vaccine also is recommended for everyone through age 26 years, if they are not vaccinated already.
- HPV vaccination is not recommended for everyone older than age 26 years. However, some

adults age 27 through 45 years who are not already vaccinated may decide to get the HPV vaccine after speaking with their doctor about their risk for new HPV infections and the possible benefits of vaccination. HPV vaccination in this age range provides less benefit, as more people have already been exposed to HPV.

HPV vaccination prevents new HPV infections, but does not treat existing infections or diseases. This is why the HPV vaccine works best when given before any exposure to HPV. You should get screened for cervical cancer regularly, even if you received an HPV vaccine. Taking small steps can help keep you safe and healthy.

Cervical Cancer
AWAWARENESS MONTH

January

approximately **12,990**
ANNUAL NEW CASES OF
INVASIVE CERVICAL CANCER
WILL BE DIAGNOSED IN THE US

roughly **4,120** WOMEN WILL LOSE THEIR LIFE TO
CERVICAL CANCER ANNUALLY

90% OF CERVICAL CANCERS ARE
ASSOCIATED WITH HUMAN
PAPILLOMAVIRUS (HPV)

HPV IS EXTREMELY PREVALENT. MOST
SEXUALLY ACTIVE MEN AND WOMEN WILL
CONTRACT IT AT SOME POINT

Cervical Cancer is Preventable

- GET A PAP TEST REGULARLY TO CATCH CERVICAL CANCER EARLY
- GET SCREENED FOR HPV
- GET AN HPV VACCINE
- USE PROTECTION IF YOU'RE SEXUALLY ACTIVE

Raise Awareness FOR THE BRAVE WOMEN
BATTLING CERVICAL CANCER

Top 10 Tips for Healthy Caribbean Cooking



1. Fire up the barbecue

Barbecuing is a healthy alternative to frying as you

omit most of the oil. Coat your lean meat, skinless chicken or pork in a jerk seasoning or a rub for great flavor and barbecue to perfection. Wet weather keeping you indoors? Roast or grill for a similarly healthier result.

2. Make the most of meat with a marinade



A good tasty marinade will give your food plenty of depth, avoiding the need for added fats like cream and butter for a good taste. For an easy

and healthy marinade, juice and zest a lime, grate some ginger, chop a Scotch bonnet pepper and combine with a little olive oil, salt and hot pepper sauce. Use to marinate lean meats or salmon or alternatively use with chopped tropical fruits such as mango, pineapple and papaya for an excellent salsa.

3. DIY coconut milk

Coconut milk is a great way to add a creamy taste to your food but beware, it is fairly high in calories. Instead of using full-fat coconut milk, opt for the light or low-fat versions, which taste just as good. Feel adventurous? Make your own by grating a fresh coconut and blending with water. Strain to remove the



coconut pulp and add to curries, stews and more of your favorite dishes for a healthier option.

4. Get a protein hit with beans

Beans are often used and are added to

soups, rice dishes and stews. When eaten with rice, kidney beans or pigeon peas provide you with a good dose of protein and all the essential amino acids your body needs. Protein is also reported to make you feel fuller for longer - meaning you are less likely to snack between meals.



5. The healthy secrets of fish

You'll often find fish on any menu - it's delicious and its health benefits are varied. Apart from being an excellent, low-fat source of protein, it provides almost your entire recommended daily amount of vitamin D. Serve a Caribbean citrus salad alongside for a hit of Vitamin C.



6. Balance blood sugar with sweet potatoes

Sweet potatoes are particularly tasty baked with spring onions, the juice and zest of an orange, salt and pepper plus a squirt of extra virgin oil. Apart from being full of vitamins C, D and B6 and the minerals iron, magnesium and potassium, they release natural sugars slowly into the bloodstream, helping to ensure your body receives a balanced and regular source of energy.

7. Spice things up with a Scotch bonnet

The Scotch bonnet is used to make hot sauces and spice up curries and stews. If you like it hot, chop a Scotch bonnet as this will release the potent heat



while adding to a dish whole will add flavor but keep things cooler (though make sure you don't eat it!) Scotch bonnets contain vitamins A and C and are good sources of potassium.

8. Pineapple - a taste of paradise

A delicious and healthy dessert option is fresh pineapple sliced, drizzled with honey and a sprinkling of ground cinnamon then grilled and served with a dollop of low-fat crème fraiche.



9. Eat your greens

Callaloo is a versatile veg and ideal for using in your own soups, stews and beyond as it's a great source of dietary fiber. If you struggle to find this super green, try spinach and collard greens as a great substitute.

10. Learn to love lean meat

Goat is a popular option for lean meat and used in popular dishes such as curried goat. Goat is actually very lean - each 100g serving of raw goat meat



only has 109 calories and is low in saturated fat, making it a great alternative to fatty red meats. Great for your heart and waistline.

Source: <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/caribbean>

Preparedness is a Year-Round Activity

Prepare Your Medicine Cabinet for an Emergency



Many people depend on **daily** medications. Nearly half of Americans take at least one prescription medication; 1 in 4 take three or more.

A large-scale natural disaster, such as a hurricane, or other emergency could make it difficult to find an open pharmacy let alone get a prescription filled. You and your family may need to rely on a prepared emergency supply.

If, for example, you or a loved one rely on daily medication to treat or manage a chronic disease, it is in your best interest to prepare your medicine cabinet for an emergency. Here's how:

- Keep **at least** a 7 to 10-day supply of prescription medications.
- Keep your medications in labeled, childproof containers.
- Keep an up-to-date list of all prescription medications, including dosage amounts and the names of their generic equivalents, your medical supply needs, and known allergies.
- Create a supply of nonprescription medications, including pain and fever relievers, diuretics, antihistamines, and antidiarrheal medications.
- Don't let the medications in your emergency supply kit expire.
- Remove, use, and replace any food and water, medications, and supplies before they expire.



Safe Storage

In the wrong hands, medicines are dangerous. Too often, the wrong hands belong to kids. About 60,000 children are taken to emergency rooms each year because they got into medicines.

The threat of medication poisoning in kids and adults is also there in an emergency evacuation when families are forced from their homes and into a shelter, a hotel, or

the home of a friend or family. Under stressful circumstances and in unfamiliar surroundings, people can forget to practice safe medication use and storage. Here are three ways you can prepare for and prevent medication poisoning after a disaster.

Keep all prescription medications and over-the-counter medicines and vitamins, including your emergency supply, out of the reach and sight of children and pets—this includes medicines in suitcases, purses, and “grab and go” bags. Create an Emergency Action Plan that includes important contact information, such as phone numbers for your physician, pediatrician, pharmacist, veterinarian, and the Poison Control Center: 800-222-1222.

Properly dispose of unused, expired, or contaminated medicines in your medicine cabinet and emergency supply. Discard medications that touched floodwater or have changed in appearance or smell. Contact a pharmacist or healthcare provider if you are unsure about a drug's safety.

For more Prepare Your Health information, tips, and checklists, visit [cdc.gov/prepyourhealth](https://www.cdc.gov/prepyourhealth).

Quick Tips

Find out if local laws permit pharmacists to dispense a 30-day refill of medications in an emergency.

Stay up to date on your immunizations and vaccinations for infections and illnesses such as tetanus and seasonal flu. Know the date of your last tetanus shot in case of injury in an emergency.

Learn more about the Emergency Prescription Assistance Program external icon. The EPAP helps people who live in a federally-declared disaster area and do not have health insurance. Eligible people can receive a free 30-day supply of their medications for as long as EPAP is active. People can also use the program to receive vaccinations or to replace certain medical supplies or some forms of medical equipment that were lost or damaged because of the emergency or while evacuating.