

Florida Department of Health • Ana M. Viamonte-Ros, M.D., M.P.H., State Surgeon General

# the health advisor

MAY/JUNE 2009

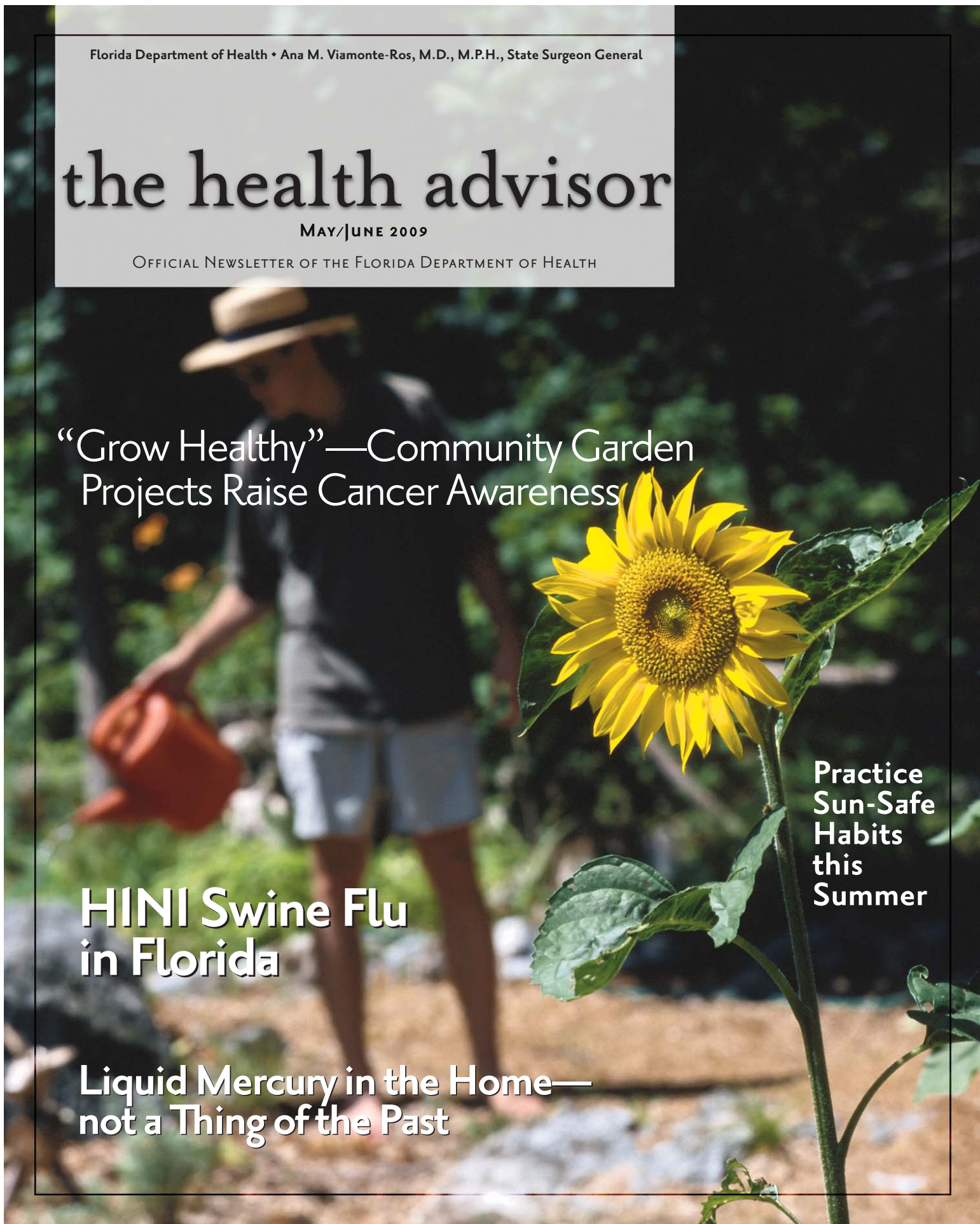
OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

“Grow Healthy”—Community Garden  
Projects Raise Cancer Awareness

H1N1 Swine Flu  
in Florida

Liquid Mercury in the Home—  
not a Thing of the Past

Practice  
Sun-Safe  
Habits  
this  
Summer



# the health advisor

Ana M. Viamonte-Ros, M.D., M.P.H., State Surgeon General

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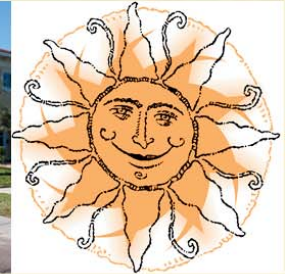
## National Health Observances

### MAY

- Florida Women's Health Month
- National Physical Education and Sport Week, 1-7
- North American Occupational Safety and Health Week, 3-9
- National Anxiety and Depression Awareness Week, 3-9
- National Mental Health Counseling Week, 6-12
- Food Allergy Awareness Week, 10-16
- National Alcohol- and Other Drug-Related Birth Defects Week, 10-6
- National Women's Health Week, 10-16
- National Neuropathy Week, 11-15
- National Women's Check-up Day, 11
- HIV Vaccine Awareness Day, 18
- National Employee Health and Fitness Day, 20
- World No Tobacco Day, 31

### JUNE

- Sun Safety Week, 1-7
- Fireworks Safety Month, June 1-July 4
- National Cancer Survivors Day, 7
- National Headache Awareness Week, 7-13
- National Men's Health Week, 15-21
- Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Week, 21-27
- Eye Safety Awareness Week, June 27-July 5



**Health care providers**, the goal of the *Health Advisor* is to present health information to your patients, clients and community partners in a reader-friendly format. Article pages are designed for posting or handouts. If there is a topic that you would like the *Health Advisor* to cover, please send your idea to the editor at [georgia\\_murphy@doh.state.fl.us](mailto:georgia_murphy@doh.state.fl.us).

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**DOH MISSION: To PROMOTE, PROTECT AND IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF ALL PEOPLE IN FLORIDA.**

**KIMBERLY A. BERFIELD, DEPUTY SECRETARY OF ADVOCACY AND POLICY**

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Please send articles for submissions and questions regarding the *Health Advisor* to Georgia Murphy; 850.245.4444, extension 2123; FAX, 850.488.6495; e-mail, [georgia\\_murphy@doh.state.fl.us](mailto:georgia_murphy@doh.state.fl.us).



## Florida Department of Health

# H1N1 Swine Flu

**As of May 11, 2009, Florida has 55 confirmed cases of H1N1 Swine Flu in the following counties: one in Alachua, Clay, Collier, Duval, Indian River, Lake, Manatee, Marion, Okeechobee, Osceola and Seminole; two in Brevard, Orange and Sarasota; three in Pinellas; seven in Lee; eight in Hillsborough; and ten in Broward and Dade each. The Florida Department of Health (DOH) continues to update these numbers daily.**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported 2,532 confirmed cases of novel influenza in the United States with three deaths.

The World Health Organization alert level remains at Phase 5. The declaration of a Phase 5 is a strong signal that the pandemic is imminent and that the time to finalize the organization, communication and implementation of the planned mitigation measures is short.

The State Surgeon General recommends the following precautions:

- If you have a respiratory illness, stay home from work or school to avoid spreading infections, including influenza, to others in your community.
- Avoid close contact with people who are coughing or otherwise appear ill.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Wash your hands frequently to lessen the spread of respiratory illness.
- If you experience coughing, fever and fatigue, possibly along with diarrhea and vomiting, contact your physician.
- If you think you have influenza, please call your health care provider and discuss whether you need to be seen in their office or an emergency department, or if you should stay home.

On May 1, 2009, under the direction of Gov. Charlie Crist, State Surgeon General Ana M. Viamonte-Ros, M.D., M.P.H., declared a public health emergency in Florida. This declaration allows the State Surgeon General to take any action necessary to protect the public health under section, 381.00315(1)(b), *Florida Statutes*.

DOH continues enhanced surveillance and outreach to physicians, hospitals and other health care professionals. An important element of Florida's successful influenza surveillance is the Florida Sentinel Physician Influenza Surveillance Network (FSPISN). FSPISN is a network of physician volunteers who report influenza activity and send selected samples of laboratory specimens to DOH laboratories for testing.

Anti-viral medications have been positioned in areas of potential need. The department has over 750,000 individual courses of anti-viral medication. DOH receives frequent updates from the CDC and continues to work with all county health departments to monitor the situation and immediately follow up on suspected cases. We have activated our response plan and we are ready.

**If you have questions or need more information, call the Florida Flu Information Line at 1.800.342.3557 anytime between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. or visit these Web sites: DOH, [www.doh.state.fl.us](http://www.doh.state.fl.us); or the CDC, [www.cdc.gov/swineflu](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu).**

submitted by the Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, Florida Department of Health



## “Grow Healthy”—Community Garden Projects Raise Cancer Awareness

THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH’S (DOH) COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CONTROL PROGRAM announces the “Grow Healthy”—Community Garden Project. The project supports healthy lifestyles and cancer awareness through selected community gardens.

Each community garden receives a supply of seeds (green bean, lettuce, basil, radish, tomato and carrot), information on community gardens and health education materials.

There are 20 official garden projects throughout Florida including: Miami, Dade City, Bronson, Chipley, Apalachicola, Spring Hill, Palm Coast, Bristol, Wauchula, Bunnell, Defuniak Springs, Live Oak, Brooksville, Ocala, St. Petersburg and Panama City. The gardens are planted and tended by many individuals and various organizations: farm workers, long-term hospital patients, at-risk youth, seniors, minority communities, county health departments, university and K–12 students, faith-based organizations and neighborhood associations.

This year’s entries featured creative ideas for sustainable gardening such as roof-top gardening, composting, water conservation through drip irrigation and rain barrels, and

organic gardening. Many garden projects will teach educational sessions on nutrition, science and sun safety. Garden vegetables will benefit project members, local charities and school fundraisers.

### **Choose a nutritious diet and a more active lifestyle**

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States—it accounts for nearly 24 percent of all deaths and is surpassed only by heart disease. According to new studies by the American Institute for Cancer Research, over 45 percent of colon cancer cases and 38 percent of breast cancer cases in the U.S. can be prevented through a more nutritious diet, an increase in physical activity and weight control. Regular health screenings and not using tobacco products also lowers your risk. Overall, a third of the most common cancers can be prevented.

For more information, visit these Web sites: DOH, [www.doh.state.fl.us/family/cancer/index](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/family/cancer/index); the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.cdc.gov/cancer](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer); or the American Institute for Cancer Research report, [www.aicr.org/site/CO](http://www.aicr.org/site/CO).

A “GROW HEALTHY”  
ENTRY FROM  
DADE CITY, FLORIDA

Farmworkers  
Self-Help, Inc.—  
Resurrection House  
Mission

submitted by Margarita Romo

Community garden project will be run by the members of Farmworkers Self-Help’s Teen Dream Team program and will benefit the entire community of Tommytown that sits just north of Dade City, Florida, and is for the most part made up of farmworkers and their families. Teen Dream Team is a youth group that numbers about 44 young people, with a nearly equal number of boys and girls. We will be teaching the farmworkers to farm for themselves. Through our partnerships with TBCCN, Moffitt Cancer Center, the American Cancer Society and the Department of Health, we have been on a quest to teach healthier lifestyles and eating habits to our people. One innovation in our community garden is that the garden will actually be spread across several families backyards. We have come up with a system of planter boxes that stand about chest high. We will start with six to ten families.



# Liquid Mercury

## HARMFUL EFFECTS, HANDLING SPILLS & PROPER DISPOSAL

by Susan Skye, Division of Environmental Health, Florida Department of Health

### Cleaning small mercury spills at home—what you **SHOULDN'T** do

- Never use a vacuum cleaner to clean up mercury.
- Never use a broom to clean up mercury.
- Never pour mercury down a drain.
- Never wash mercury-contaminated items in a washing machine.
- Never wear shoes that may be contaminated with mercury.

### Cleaning small mercury spills at home—what you **SHOULD** do

- Open windows and doors to air out the room.
- People not involved in the cleanup should stay away.
- Wear puncture-resistant gloves. Pick up mercury beads with sticky tape (like masking or duct tape). Store the beads in a sealed plastic container. Call your county's household hazardous waste program for disposal instructions.
- Carpeting, clothing, shoes or anything contaminated with mercury should be removed and discarded.
- Keep children and pets away from the spill and contaminated trash.
- After you clean up, wash your hands and face thoroughly.

REMEMBER BACK in the '60s and '70s when everyone used glass mercury thermometers? Back then we thought it was OK to play with mercury as it rolled around the bathroom sink after a thermometer broke. No more.

Liquid mercury vaporizes easily and is most harmful when it is inhaled. Now we know that mercury vapors are particularly unsafe for pregnant women and children. Mercury in the mother's body passes on to the fetus. The harmful effects to an unborn child include brain damage, mental retardation, incoordination, blindness, seizures and inability to speak. Children exposed to mercury may develop nervous and digestive system problems, and they may also suffer kidney damage. Pregnant women and children should stay away from rooms where liquid mercury has been used or spilled.

Short-term exposures to high levels of liquid mercury vapors are serious and can make anyone sick. You could suffer from lung damage, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, increases in blood pressure or heart rate, skin rashes and eye irritation.

### Do you have mercury in your home?

Mercury can be found in: antiques, batteries, fluorescent light bulbs, paint, switches, appliance relays, sphygmomanometers (measure blood pressure), thermometers and thermostats.

### Fluorescent light bulbs contain a small amount of mercury

If you break a bulb, you will see the fine powder from the phosphorus coating on the inside of the bulb, not mercury beads. Follow the clean-up steps listed on the left. The powder and glass can be picked up with sticky tape (like masking or duct tape). Be sure to wear puncture-resistant gloves.

For more information about fluorescent light bulbs, call Kendra Goff toll-free at 877.798.2772.

### Learn more about mercury

More information about mercury can be found at [www.myfloridaeh.com/community/SUPERFUND/pdf/mercurybro2.pdf](http://www.myfloridaeh.com/community/SUPERFUND/pdf/mercurybro2.pdf) or call Susan Skye toll-free at 877.798.2772.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is another good source for details on mercury spills and clean up: [www.dep.state.fl.us/waste/categories/mercury/pages/medical\\_facilities](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/waste/categories/mercury/pages/medical_facilities).

## The Florida Department of Health Receives National Award for Injury Prevention Efforts

submitted by the Office of Injury Prevention, Florida Department of Health

THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH'S (DOH) OFFICE OF INJURY PREVENTION was recently honored by the State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association (STIPDA) with the prestigious Prevention Program Achievement Award. The office received the award for its progressive leadership in the national injury prevention community and its innovative approaches to injury and violence prevention.

Since its inception in 2003, the Florida Office of Injury Prevention has had many successes:

**Spearheaded the bill passage** to establish the injury program in state statute.

**Developed a model injury prevention strategic plan** for Florida.

**Implemented a five-year strategic plan and successor plan** and was the first state injury program in the U.S. to accomplish this.

**Established in 2006, the annual Drowning Prevention Awareness Campaign: "Keep Your Eyes on the Kids"** in those Florida counties with the highest number of drowning deaths among children ages 1 to 4. The campaign is advertised during swimming season in those 10 counties.

**Established a partnership with the Department of Elder Affairs** to target falls prevention and hosted the initial "Falls Prevention for Seniors" seminar.

**Initiated DOH's first public/private partnership** and developed "Denny's Kids Safety Zone" with Denny's, Inc. The goal of the partnership was to reduce childhood injury, the leading cause of death for Florida's children ages 0 to 14.

**Through the Office of Injury Prevention, DOH is the lead state agency for Safe Kids Florida.** Safe Kids includes 15 coalitions, or chapters, and covers 29 counties. Counties with a Safe Kids coalition or chapter have a lower unintentional injury rate: 9.5 injuries per 100,000 versus the state rate of 10.8 injuries (2007).

Formed in 1992, STIPDA is the only national non-profit organization comprised of public health injury professionals. STIPDA strengthens the abilities of state, territorial and local health departments to reduce death and disability caused by injury and violence. For more information about STIPDA, visit [www.stipda.org](http://www.stipda.org).



STIPDA award presented to Office of Injury Prevention Director Lisa VanderWerf-Hourigan (center) by STIPDA President Shelli Stephens-Stidham (left) and STIPDA Executive Director Amber Williams (right).

"It is an honor for me as the head of the Department of Health that the State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association has awarded to the Office of Injury Prevention the 2009 Injury Prevention Program Achievement Award. It is a well-deserved recognition and I express my gratitude for your extraordinary efforts."

—Ana M. Viamonte-Ros, M.D.,  
M.P.H., State Surgeon General

**For more information about preventing injury, visit [www.doh.state.fl.us/injury](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/injury).**

“...every healthy child can learn...”

Connie Blackwell, Florida's 2009 School Nurse of the Year



## School Nursing: the Link Between Health & Student Success

by Kathleen C. Rose, R.N., M.H.A., N.C.S.N., Florida Association of School Nurses president  
(submitted by the School Health Services Program, Florida Department of Health)

ONE OF EVERY FIVE STUDENTS IN FLORIDA HAS A CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITION—if not detected and treated, these conditions can impact a student's quality of education. In over 100 years since the first public school nursing program began in New York City, the goal of removing health barriers and keeping students in school has remained the same, but the complexity of student health has increased dramatically. In order to recognize the efforts of school nurses, March 27, 2009 was designated School Health Advocacy Day in Florida. The proclamation delivered on that day stated: “It is recognized that the goal of school nursing is: to remove the barriers to a student's education, to improve student safety, and to educate and empower students to live healthier lives.”

Mary Jackman, a school nurse in Charlotte County, works with students who have chronic health problems. “School nursing provides me with an opportunity to educate children and families about chronic illnesses, such as asthma, and see progress in a child's understanding of their health.”

School nurses promote student safety, deliver safe care in the clinic, administer medications, and promote safety in the school cafeteria and playground. Amy Barnes, a school nurse in Lee County and a Florida Nursing Association Clinical Excellence winner, describes her profession as “the hardest job I ever loved.”

Whether providing first aid, counseling or referring a student, finding health resources, educating or establishing a nursing care plan, the school nurse works to promote student success, not just in school, but in life. Connie Blackwell of Collier County, Florida's 2009 School Nurse of the Year, has stated, “I respect the saying that ‘every child can learn,’ but feel it more accurately is: every healthy child can learn.”

For more information, contact the School Health Services Program at 850.245.4445.



### Florida Registered School Nurse Facts, 2007–08

- 1,030 RNs
- 1 RN for every 3.45 schools
- RNs provide training, supervision and delegation of health services to 627 licensed practical nurses, 1,115 health aides and other school staff.
- RNs performed 1,904,845 nursing assessments or counseling services.
- RNs conducted 1,547,131 consultations regarding individual student health issues.
- RNs performed 322,645 complex medical procedures.
- RNs referred 118,669 students for additional evaluation or treatment for abnormal health screening results.
- RNs taught 67,003 health education and prevention classes.
- RNs developed 50,185 health care plans for students with chronic or complex health conditions.
- RNs participated in 29,868 planning meetings for Exceptional Student Education programs.
- 341 comprehensive schools offer increased RN staffing (1 RN to 2 schools) resulting in 87 percent of students returning to class after health room visits.

# Tampa Child Protection Team Finds a New Home

submitted by Children's Medical Services,  
Florida Department of Health

Mary Lee's House has a welcoming, family-friendly atmosphere.



IN FLORIDA, THE CHILD PROTECTION TEAM (CPT) PROGRAM has provided diagnostic assessments for alleged victims of abuse and neglect for over 30 years.

On October 15, 2008, the Tampa Child Protection Team moved to the new Mary Lee's House Child Protection and Advocacy Center on North Armenia Avenue in West Tampa. This state-of-the-art building provides a child- and family-friendly setting for conducting CPT services.

Recognized as Hillsborough County's experts on child abuse and neglect, the Tampa Child Protection Team is staffed by experienced physicians, nurse practitioners and child protection specialists.

Children referred to the Tampa Child Protection Team, or any other Florida CPT, receive assessments that supplement the child protective investigation of alleged abuse or neglect. The CPT assessments may consist of pediatric medical exams or interviews with the child and family members. Case staffings with community partners are coordinated and led by the CPT's child protection specialist who provides investigators with diagnostic outcomes, and offers best-practice recommendations. The goal is ensuring child safety and preventing re-abuse.

In other states, children are often transported to crowded emergency rooms and examined by doctors who may have no experience distinguishing inflicted abuses from accidental injuries. Sometimes this results in children being returned to a dangerous environment or removed from a safe one. Even if the diagnosis is accurate, the emergency room process often causes unnecessary trauma to the child and family.

Mary Lee's House offers a variety of children's services including Healthy Start and a mental health counseling program. The local CPT psychologist visits the center weekly to complete evaluations and consult on cases.

For more information about Child Protection Teams, contact Susan McLaughlin at 850.245.4444, extension 2258, or visit [www.cms-kids.com](http://www.cms-kids.com).

# Sun+Skin

submitted by the Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, Florida Department of Health

SUMMER IS THE SEASON THAT DEFINES FLORIDA, and summer in Florida is all about the sun. Floridians play, exercise, socialize and eat outside. The sun is the center of our Florida lifestyle, but all that sunshine has a dark side—too much sun can cause skin cancer. Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer, but you can prevent it if you change your attitudes and behaviors.

Enjoy the sun, but always keep something between the sun and your skin. Wear sunscreen like you wear your car seatbelt—automatically. Sunscreens come in lotions, gels, sprays, sticks and wipes, but whatever you use, choose a broad-spectrum sunscreen that protects against both UVA and UVB rays, and has a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher.

Start a healthy habit and live by the 15-30-2 rule: use a sunscreen with at least an SPF of 15 every day; put sunscreen all over your body at least 30 minutes before you go outside; and remember to put more sunscreen on every 2 hours. Use the 15-30-2 rule whenever you go outside—whether you plan on being in the sun or the shade.

## Teens, children, babies and sun safety

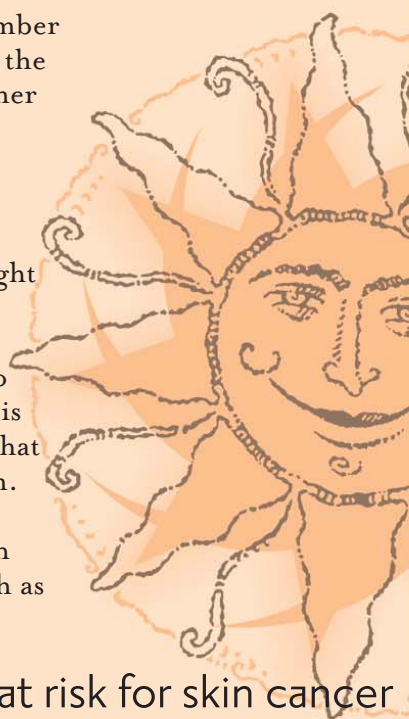
It's important that teens and children are taught sun-safe habits. Eighty percent of skin damage from the sun occurs before the age of 20, and it takes 40 years for this damage to progress and develop into cancer—sunscreen is a must for young people. Look for products that won't sting their eyes when kids sweat or swim.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, babies less than six months old can wear sunscreen on small areas of the skin such as

the face and back of the hands. But your baby's best defense against sunburn is staying in the shade.

Remember, while sunscreen helps protect skin, it doesn't eliminate all of the sun's rays. Wearing sunscreen doesn't mean you can spend extra time in the sun. If you want to learn more, visit [www.doh.state.fl.us/family/cancer](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/family/cancer) or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site, [www.CDC.gov](http://www.CDC.gov).

For information about tanning beds, contact the Florida Department of Health's Tanning Facilities Program at 850.245.4277 or visit [www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/community/tanning/](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/community/tanning/).



Everyone is at risk for skin cancer  
—regardless of age, race or ethnicity.

## Everyone should take up these sun-safe habits:

- **Cover up with clothing:** wear light-weight, long-sleeved shirts and pants. Consider swim shirts for the pool and beach. Swim shirts are designed for swimming, and some have SPF ratings of up to 150.
- **Wear a hat** to protect your face, scalp, ears and neck.
- **Wear wraparound sunglasses** that provide 100 percent UV ray protection.
- **Schedule an annual exam** with your doctor that includes checking for any changes to your skin and, between exams, you should check your skin monthly for any changes (don't forget your back!).
- **Exercise and play in the shade** during the hottest parts of the day when the sun's rays are strongest: between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.