

**Jefferson County****Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

# Central Oregon Public Health Monthly Update

## April 25, 2025

The Central Oregon Public Health Newsletter is now available in Spanish!

To receive it in your mailbox click [here](#).

Usted puede encontrar el boletín de este mes en español [aquí](#)!

## Spring Cleaning Safely: Protect Yourself from Hantavirus

As Central Oregon residents begin spring cleaning in garages, sheds, and cabins that sat closed through the winter, it's important to remember that rodent droppings—especially from deer mice—can pose serious health risks, including exposure to **Hantavirus**.

### What is Hantavirus?

Hantavirus is a rare but potentially deadly virus spread through the **urine, droppings, or saliva of infected rodents**. People can become infected by **breathing in dust contaminated** with the virus, especially during cleaning activities that stir up rodent droppings in enclosed spaces.

### Central Oregon Risk

*Deer mice—common in Central Oregon—are carriers of Hantavirus. While [human](#) cases are rare, they have occurred in Oregon, and it's important to take proper precautions when cleaning areas where rodents may have been active.*

### Safe Cleaning Guidelines

- **Prepare Your Supplies:**
  - Wear **rubber or plastic gloves**.
  - Use an **EPA-registered disinfectant** or prepare a bleach solution by mixing **1 part bleach to 9 parts water**.

- **Disinfect Contaminated Areas:**
  - **Do not sweep or vacuum rodent urine, droppings, or nesting materials, as this can release harmful particles into the air.**
  - Spray the affected areas thoroughly with the disinfectant or bleach solution until saturated.
  - Let the disinfectant sit for **5 minutes** or as specified on the product label.
- **Remove Waste:**
  - After the disinfectant has set, use paper towels to wipe up the urine and droppings.
  - Dispose of the used paper towels in a covered garbage can that is regularly emptied.
- **Clean and Disinfect Surrounding Surfaces:**
  - Mop floors and clean countertops, cabinets, and drawers with the disinfectant solution to ensure all potential contaminants are addressed.
- **Properly Remove Protective Gear:**
  - After removing gloves, thoroughly wash your hands with soap and warm water. If soap is unavailable and hands are not visibly soiled, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

By following these updated guidelines, you can effectively minimize the risk of Hantavirus exposure during your spring-cleaning activities.

For more detailed information, visit the CDC's official page on [How to Clean Up After Rodents](#).

## Spring Is a Great Time to Get Ready for Smoke

Spring is here in Central Oregon! With warmer weather and longer days, many of us are getting outside to do yard work and spring cleaning. It's also the perfect time to get ready for wildfire season—and the smoke that can come with it.

### Why You Might See Smoke in Spring

In the spring, land managers with Deschutes National Forest, Ochoco National Forest, and Crooked River Grasslands use the good weather to do *prescribed burns*. These are carefully planned fires that help reduce the risk of large wildfires. While prescribed burns help protect our communities, they can also create smoke, which can lower air quality and affect your health.

### Smoke Is Unhealthy for Everyone

Breathing in wildfire smoke is bad for your health, even if you're healthy. Some people—like older adults, kids, and those with heart or lung conditions—are more likely to feel the effects. Wildfire smoke is especially a concern for children because their lungs are still developing. The best thing anyone can do is limit their exposure to smoke when it's in the air.

### How to Protect Your Health from Smoke

- **Stay updated**
  - Visit the [Central Oregon Fire website](#) and sign up for alerts by texting **COFIRE** to **888-777**.
- **Close windows and doors at night**
  - Smoke often settles in the evening and overnight, making air quality worse while you sleep.
- **Make a health plan**
  - If you have a medical condition, talk to your doctor about how to manage it during smoky days.
- **Check the air quality**
  - Use websites such as Firenow or apps like Paku for Purple Air to see real-time air quality in your area and adjust your plans accordingly.
- **Change outdoor plans if needed**
  - Try to avoid being active outside when the air quality is poor. For example, take your walk in the afternoon instead of the morning.
- **Keep your indoor air clean**
  - Use an air purifier, upgrade your HVAC filter, or make a low-cost [filter fan](#) at home.
- **Use an N95 mask if needed**
  - For heavy smoke or long outdoor exposure, wear an N95 mask to help protect your lungs.
- **Find cleaner air spaces**
  - If you don't have a way to keep the air clean at home, call **211** or go to the 211 website to find nearby spaces with cleaner air.

### Plan Now, Breathe Easier Later

Prescribed burns are planned—so you can plan for them too. Taking steps now to prepare for smoke will help you stay safer during wildfire season, when smoke may arrive without warning and stick around longer.

Take a few minutes this spring to get smoke ready. Your lungs will thank you later!

# Spot signs of stress in young people

## Swimming Pools and Public Health

Swimming pools and spas are great places for fun, exercise, and relaxation. Swimming is a favorite way to spend time in America. It is important to keep these places clean and safe for everyone.

### Can You Get Sick from a Swimming Pool?

If a pool is not properly maintained and treated with chemicals, harmful germs can grow in the water. Swimmers can catch skin, eye and ear infections, and even stomach problems. If you swim with an open sore, germs can get into your bloodstream. Some bacteria and viruses, like *E. coli* and norovirus, can survive in pool water if it is not disinfected correctly. While chlorine helps to disinfect pools, it does not kill germs immediately; some very tough germs (*Cryptosporidium spp.*, a parasite that can live in water) can take hours or days to kill even in properly chlorinated water. That is why pool operators must add chemicals to keep the water safe.

### Why Are Chemicals Used in Pools?

Many swimmers do not like the smell of chlorine or other pool chemicals. Some even think these chemicals are bad for them. However, chemicals like chlorine are needed to kill harmful germs. Without them, the swimming pools would become dirty and unsafe.

Chemicals do two main things:

1. **Kill germs** – Chlorine and other disinfectants destroy bacteria, viruses, and fungi that could make swimmers sick.
2. **Oxidize and remove waste** – When people do not shower before getting into the pool, they deposit everything on their skin (makeup, deodorant, lotions, hair and dirt) into the pool. Even medications people take can be excreted through their skin and end up in the pool. Filters only remove the big stuff. This makes the need for chemical cleaning more important to protect public health. Most of the chlorine in pools is used to oxidize (burn out) this swimmer waste.

### How Can We Reduce Chemicals in the Pool?

Swimmers play a big role in keeping pools clean. If swimmers want fewer chemicals in the pool, they can help by following these simple steps:

1. **Shower before swimming** – A quick rinse removes a significant amount of sweat, dirt, and oils. Try it yourself: Plug the shower and take a 1-minute rinsing shower, without using soap. Rub your skin all

over under the running water. Turn off the shower and look at what remains in the water. Is the water clean and clear, or is it grey with some dirt and other impurities mixed in? All that 'stuff' must be chemically removed from the pool water.

2. **Avoid using lotions and makeup before swimming** – These products add extra waste to the pool.
3. **Use the bathroom before getting in the water** – This reduces the risk of urine and fecal matter contaminating the pool. Take your kids on frequent (hourly) bathroom breaks.

Swimming pools need chemicals to stay safe and clean. These chemicals kill germs and remove waste brought in by swimmers. If swimmers want less chlorine in the water, they can do their part by showering and keeping unnecessary substances out of the pool. A little effort from everyone can help make pools cleaner, safer, and more enjoyable for all!

Curious about inspections where you swim? Check out inspection reports:

[Deschutes County](#)

[Crook County](#)

[Jefferson County](#)

More information on Healthy Swimming can be found on the [CDC website](#)!

In this episode of *[Inside Deschutes County](#)*, we talk with Deschutes County Health Officer Dr. Richard Fawcett and Public Health Director Heather Kaisner about the recent concerns surrounding measles. They break down how measles spreads, why it's making a comeback, and what steps residents can take to protect themselves and the community. Tune in for an important public health update and what you need to know to stay safe.

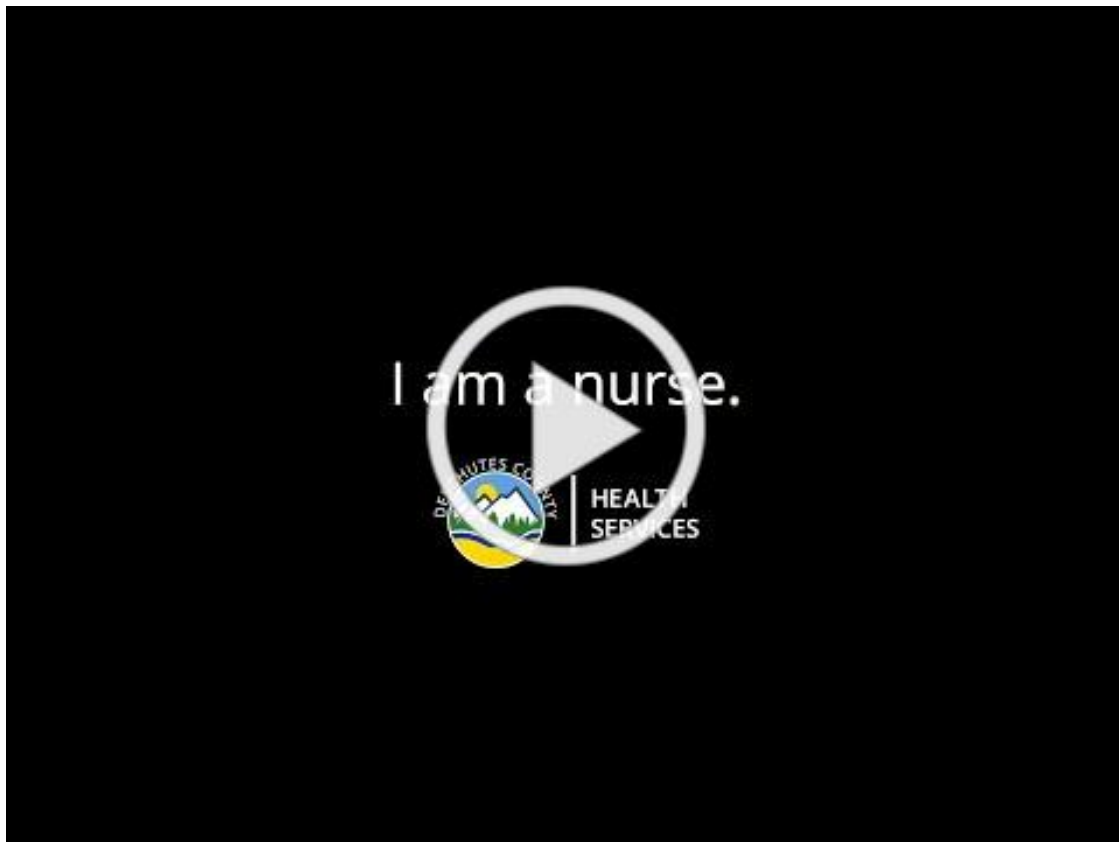
Talk to your healthcare provider for more information about Measles and how to obtain a vaccine or visit our websites:

[Deschutes County Public Health Immunizations](#)

[Crook County Public Health Immunizations](#)

[Jefferson County Public Health Immunizations](#)

**National Nurses Week is May 6 - 12**



Help Us Celebrate National Nurses Week!  
We are so thankful for all the work our public health nurses do!

## See Us in the News

Each month we will bring you links to local news articles on local public health topics.

### Check out this editorial: [The value of Healthy Schools | The Bulletin](#)

Healthy Schools is a collaboration between Deschutes County Public Health and Bend-La Pine middle and high Schools that started in Fall of 2022. The effort embeds Public Health Specialists into public schools to provide schools with on-site prevention expertise such as suicide prevention, child sexual abuse prevention, and primary drug prevention. A complete outcome evaluation report will be published in the fall of 2025.

Health Services hosts numerous classes and special events each month!

For details about these events and any updates please visit our [Health Services Calendar](#).

## Public Health Resources:

- Central Oregon public health web resources:
  - [Crook County](#)
  - [Deschutes County](#)
  - [Jefferson County](#)

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