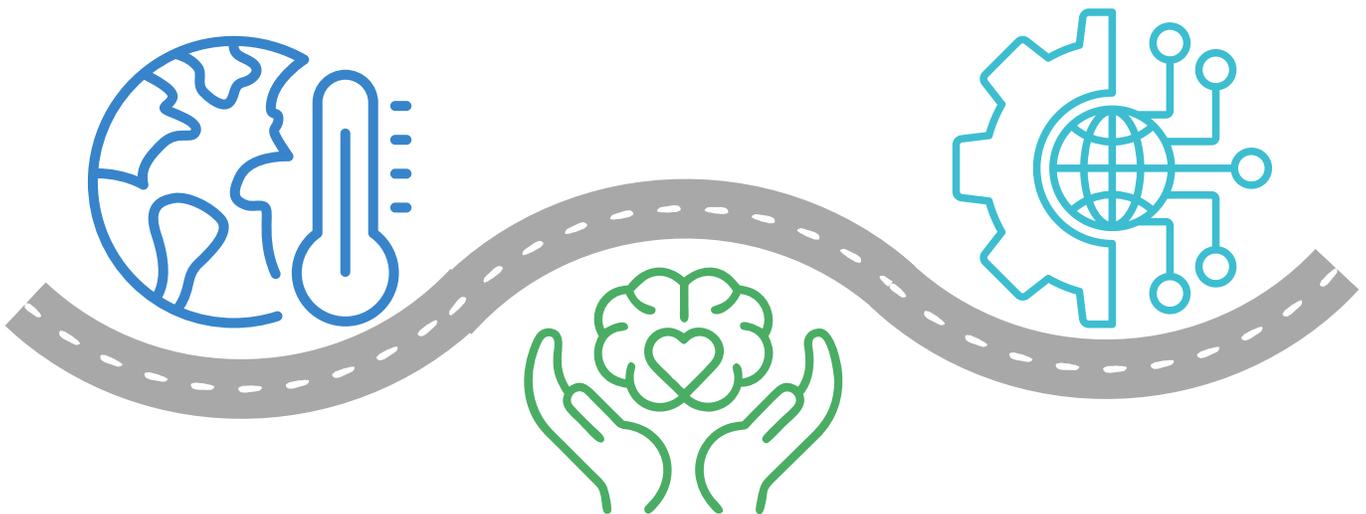




PUBLIC HEALTH NEWSLETTER

BASTROP COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT



Let's face it—life can get pretty complicated. Between juggling work, family, and the occasional inner conflicts which appear at 3:00 am, it's easy to lose sight of what really matters. That's where the idea of "back to basics" comes in. It's like hitting the reset button on your favorite video game—except this time, the game is public health, and the stakes are way higher than just beating the final boss. To describe public health basics and beyond, we're diving into the public health lane with a mix of nostalgia, innovation, and a dash of humor.

The Basics: Public Health 101

Public health is like the ultimate team sport—it's all about working together to keep everyone safe, healthy, and thriving. The fundamentals are simple but powerful:

- **Prevention:** Think of it as the "apple a day" philosophy, but on a global scale. Vaccines, clean air and water, safe food and health education are the MVPs here.
- **Fair and Just Opportunity:** Because no one should have to choose between paying rent and seeing a doctor. Public health is all about leveling the playing field.
- **Collaboration:** Whether it's governments, nonprofits, or your neighborhood bake sale, teamwork makes the dream work.

These basics have been saving lives for centuries. Remember when smallpox was a thing? Neither do we, thanks to public health heroes who kicked it to the curb. But the game has changed, and the challenges are bigger than ever.

BACK TO THE BASICS (CONT.)

Beyond the Basics: Tackling Today's Curveballs

Public health isn't just about fighting germs anymore (though we're still pretty good at that). It's about tackling the big, messy problems that keep us up at night. Here's how we're leveling up:

1. Climate Change and Environmental Health: The Plot Twist We Didn't See Coming

Mother Nature is throwing some serious shade—literally. Heatwaves, hurricanes, floods, tornadoes and wildfires are wreaking havoc, and public health is stepping up. From advocating for clean water and air to helping communities prepare for disasters, we're turning up the heat on climate action (pun intended).

2. Mental Health: No Longer the Elephant in the Room

Let's get real—mental health is just as important as physical health. Public health is finally giving it the spotlight it deserves, with initiatives to make therapy cool, reduce stigma, and ensure everyone has access to care.

3. Tech Takeover: The Good, the Bad, and the Wi-Fi

From fitness trackers that guilt-trip you into taking more steps to AI that predicts disease outbreaks, technology is changing the game. But with great power comes great responsibility and public health is working to ensure tech benefits everyone, not just those with the latest gadgets.

The Road Ahead: Keep Calm and Public Health On

Here's the thing: public health isn't just for scientists in lab coats or policy wonks in suits. It's for all of us. Whether you're organizing a community clean-up, sharing a mental health resource with a friend, or just washing your hands like a pro (seriously, keep doing that), you're part of the solution.

The future of public health is bright—and maybe a little chaotic—but that's what makes it exciting. By sticking to the basics and embracing innovation, we can tackle whatever comes our way Bastrop County. So, let's roll up our sleeves, and get to work. After all, the public health lane isn't just a road—it's a journey. And spoiler alert: it's one worth taking.

Look for some exciting public health news coming your way from the Bastrop County Public Health Department.



WHEN WATERS RISE: A SURVIVAL GUIDE TO FLOODS

Flooding: Nature's Unwelcome Surprise Party

Floods are a normal part of the water cycle—like Mother Nature's way of rearranging the furniture. They can come from heavy rain, overflowing rivers, storm surges, or even poorly designed drainage systems. Floods tend to crash in suddenly and leave a mess.

Floods are among the most common (and rudely destructive) natural disasters in the U.S., causing more deaths yearly than tornadoes, hurricanes, or lightning. They come in different varieties—flash floods, river floods, coastal floods, and urban floods. The most dangerous? Flash floods. They hit hard, hit fast, and don't care about your weekend plans.

The Aftermath: It's Not Just Wet Socks

Bastrop County, located in Central Texas' infamous "Flash Flood Alley," is no stranger to surprise water invasions. Between steep terrain, shallow soil, and heavy rainfall, flood risks here are high. And with the Colorado River nearby, residents get a double dose of potential water woes.

Floods don't just ruin carpets—they bring serious dangers like injury, displacement, and disease. Floodwaters aren't just water; they're a murky mix of sewage, agricultural runoff, and industrial waste. Contaminated water can spread diseases like cholera, typhoid, hepatitis, and leptospirosis.

And as if that wasn't bad enough, standing water turns into prime mosquito real estate, increasing the risk of malaria, dengue fever, Zika, and more.

Even after the water recedes, problems persist. Mold and mildew thrive in damp homes, leading to respiratory issues—especially for vulnerable groups like children, the elderly, and people with asthma. Flooding can also release hazardous chemicals from storage facilities.

Preparing Like a Pro

While floods are inevitable, their effects don't have to be catastrophic. The first step? Know your risk—check if your home is in a flood-prone area. Also, stay alert by signing up for emergency notifications with the [Bastrop Office of Emergency Management](#).

Another key step is preparing a Go-Bag, packed with essentials like bottled water (the clean kind), non-perishable food, medications, flashlights, hygiene supplies, a first-aid kit, and important documents.

Additional survival strategies include:

- Stockpiling clean water.
- Boiling water before drinking.
- Eliminating standing water to stop mosquitoes from throwing a pool party.
- Avoiding floodwaters since they contain more surprises.
- Evacuating early if authorities give the thumbs-up to leave.
- Wearing protective gear like gloves, boots, and masks while cleaning up.



WHEN WATERS RISE (CONT.)

The Power of Preparedness: Because Rowboats Aren't a Solution

Floods are an unpredictable force of nature, but chaos doesn't have to be. A community's strength is in its readiness –staying informed, preparing supplies, and taking action before the water starts rising. Because let's face it: it's better to be prepared than to learn the hard way when waters start to rise.



PUBLIC HEALTH CLINICAL SERVICES *ON-THE-GO!*

Thousands of children and adults living in Bastrop County need a vaccination every year for school, work, or after contact with a person who has an infection like measles or whooping cough. Vaccines are important to keep us healthy by preventing sickness or helping to keep us out of the hospital if we become ill. One way to make it easier to get a needed vaccine is to bring the service closer to where people live, play and work.

Bastrop County Public Health Department (BCPHD) is acting to make some clinical services like vaccinations available around the County. A “clinic on wheels” is in the works which can travel to communities and offer services to those in need.

This will mean less waiting time and travelling for individuals and families, making it easier to receive care.

BCPHD has a mobile trailer available to give clinical services *on-the-go*. Plans are under way to equip the trailer, hire staff and find the best ways to make public health clinical services more available to Bastrop County residents. Watch for updated information on mobile health services in future newsletters. Share your ideas with us at [public.health@co.bastrop.tx.us!](mailto:public.health@co.bastrop.tx.us)



PEDIATRIC HEAD INJURIES ON THE RISE

An alarming rise in pediatric head injuries has put Bastrop County in the spotlight. A recent analysis of local emergency department records reveals a staggering increase in traumatic brain injury (TBI) visits among children—from 163 cases in 2017 to 600 in 2023.

The youngest residents, particularly those under five, now face the highest risk, with TBI-related ER visits occurring at rates 50% higher than those of older children. This dramatic surge has raised concerns among public health officials and caregivers alike, prompting a closer look at why the county’s youngest residents are increasingly vulnerable—and what can be done to reverse the trend.

But it’s not just the numbers—it’s who’s being impacted. Black children experienced TBI visit rates twice as high as their white peers, while rates for Hispanic children were 60% higher. Bastrop’s pediatric TBI death rate also far outpaces neighboring Travis County, underscoring geographic inequities in injury outcomes.

Falls remain the leading cause, but experts say preventable injuries are too often tied to gaps in home safety, early care access, and education. With focused community efforts, especially around toddler safety and support for underserved families, Bastrop has an opportunity to turn these trends around.



BUILDING A HEALTHIER BASTROP COUNTY-TOGETHER

We’re thrilled to share exciting progress from the Bastrop County Collaborative for Housing + Health (BCCHH)—a growing partnership dedicated to expanding access to affordable housing as a pathway to better health. Thanks to a generous grant to the Bastrop County Public Health Department from St. David’s Foundation, Bastrop County is leading a truly community-driven planning process to design a new housing development that reflects the values, priorities, and needs of our residents.

This work includes identifying a site, collaborating with architects and engineers, and—most importantly—listening to the voices of our community members. This transformative work wouldn’t be possible without the dedication of our BCCHH partners:

- Bastrop County Public Health Department
- The Cities of Bastrop, Elgin & Smithville
- Bastrop County Cares
- Bastrop County Long Term Recovery Team
- Beautiful Beginnings
- Career Tracks
- HEAL Alliance
- Homes for Good Foundation
- Methodist Healthcare Ministries
- Save an Angel
- Smithville Community Clinic
- Texas Center for Local Food
- Rural Whole Health Coalition
- Smithville Hospital Authority Board
- Square One
- Texas Housing Foundation



Together, we’re laying the groundwork for a healthier, more equitable future, that begins with a safe, affordable place to call home. For updates or to attend our next quarterly meeting on June 27, contact BCCHH Project Coordinator Amy Mills: amy.mills@co.bastrop.tx.us

DETECTING DISEASE: NOTIFIABLE DISEASES IN BASTROP COUNTY

Through collaboration with Texas DSHS, the health department has been able to identify cases of notifiable diseases in Bastrop County based on reports provided by healthcare providers in the county that were confirmed via laboratory results. As of April 23, there have been 31 reported cases of notifiable diseases this year.

The top five include:

- Campylobacteriosis (9 cases)
- Streptococcus Pneumoniae (7 cases)
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough) (5 cases)
- Salmonellosis (4 cases)
- Shiga-toxin producing E. coli (2 cases)

Pertussis cases are also trending slightly upward in the area, consistent with other parts of Central Texas. While numbers remain within expected ranges, prompt treatment and prevention efforts - especially in schools and households - are essential.

As of June 15, 2025, Bastrop County does not have any confirmed measles cases. Bastrop County Public Health continues to collaborate with DSHS to protect and inform the community. Healthcare providers are encouraged and reminded to report any suspected measles cases to Texas DSHS Region 7.

DISEASE REPORTING: FOODBORNE ILLNESSES

As temperatures continue to rise, Bastrop County is experiencing an increase in foodborne illnesses. In an attempt to protect our community from foodborne illnesses, we are pleased to announce the launch of an online reporting form that allows community members to report suspected food-related illnesses quickly and securely.

If you or someone you know has recently experienced symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or stomach cramps after eating food from a restaurant or public event, we encourage you to complete this form via the attached QR code or at <https://arcg.is/1ufff80>. Submitting reports will help us identify potential outbreaks and ensure timely public health responses, including inspections and follow-up.



CURATING OUR BRAND

As a newly formed health department, the BCPHD is working hard to curate and establish our “branding.”

To that effect, the team has collaborated to create the BCPHD’s first ever logo (pictured right)!

Our goal was to incorporate what the health department stands for as well as the community we serve, all of which is tied together with our motto of “Prevent. Promote. Protect.”

Be sure to let us know what you think of our new logo by emailing us at public.health@co.bastrop.tx.us!



TAKE CHARGE, STAY STRONG, MEN’S HEALTH MATTERS

June is National Men’s Health Awareness month! Here are some steps you can take to have a healthier “you”:

- Incorporate a healthy diet with fruits, vegetables, and the vitamins and minerals your body needs
- Get your body moving by playing with your children or grandchildren, taking the stairs, or engaging in more traditional forms of exercise like walking or weightlifting
- Prioritize your health by scheduling regular checkups and preventative screenings or seeking mental health services today

Remember: your health matters all year long!



CONTACT US

The Bastrop County Public Health Department is here to provide support in all aspects of Public Health. As we are a newly established health department, we are not yet functioning at full capacity. Please allow us some time to respond to any comments, questions, or feedback. We look forward to hearing from our community. While you are welcome and encouraged to share this newsletter with your networks (with credit to the BCPHD), we ask that you seek permission to distribute or reproduce this work in other formats. Thank you!

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