



# OLAKINO MAIKA'I

To Improve Your Health and Well-Being



## New Year's Health Resolutions

Discover simple habits that can help you feel stronger, more energized, and ready for the year ahead.



## Dry January

Curious what a month without alcohol can do for your body and mind? Explore how Dry January can reset routines and support healthier choices.



## Mabel Smyth

Step back in time and learn how a pioneering Native Hawaiian nurse helped shape the future of public health in Hawai'i.

*Photo credit: Honolulu Star-Advertiser*

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## Healthy New Year's Resolutions: Small Changes, Big Impact



A new year is a fresh start, and even small, simple habits can make a big difference in how we feel. You don't need a dramatic overhaul to improve your health in 2026. In fact, health experts consistently remind us that sustainable, achievable steps are the most effective for long-term wellness.

**Move a little more each day.**

Whether it's walking the dog, taking the stairs, or enjoying sunset strolls at the beach, a little extra movement supports heart health, boosts energy, and reduces stress. Hawai'i's beautiful outdoor spaces make it easier (and more fun!) to stay active.

**Nourish your body with healthy choices.**

Adding one extra serving of fruits or veggies, swapping sugary drinks for water, or enjoying more local produce can improve overall nutrition without feeling restrictive. Small upgrades still count.

**Prioritize sleep.**

Quality rest helps strengthen immunity, improve mood, and support healthy brain function. 7-9 hours of sleep is recommended for most adults – so make time to unwind, turn off screens, and create a relaxing bedtime routine.

No matter where you start, every positive step – no matter how small – can lead to big improvements over time. Here's to a healthier, happier 2026 for you and your 'ohana!

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## MO'OLELO OLAKINO

### *History of Health*

## Mabel Smyth: A Pioneer in Hawai'i's Public Health



*Hawai'i Association of Social Workers taken at Mabel Smyth Building. Photo courtesy Hawai'i State Archives.*





On January 4, 1941, the **Mabel Smyth Memorial Building** was dedicated in Honolulu, honoring a trailblazing nurse whose work shaped public health across the islands.

Mabel Leilani Smyth (1892–1936) served as head nurse at Palama Settlement before becoming the first Director of the Public Nursing Service for the Territory of Hawai‘i, and she was the first public-health nurse of Native Hawaiian ancestry to hold that post.

Under Smyth’s leadership, public-health nursing in Hawai‘i expanded statewide, emphasizing maternal and infant care, community outreach, and professional training. These efforts laid the groundwork for modern public-health programs in the Territory and later the State.

Designed by noted architect C.W. Dickey, the two-story Art Deco building originally housed nursing and medical organizations, a medical library, and an auditorium, becoming a hub for continuing education and collaboration among Hawai‘i’s health professionals.

Today, the Smyth Memorial Building stands as a reminder of Smyth’s legacy: compassionate service, professional leadership, and a lasting commitment to improving the health of Hawai‘i’s communities.

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## Hawai‘i and the West Coast Health Alliance






Recent decisions by federal agencies to question or change their once-reliable guidance on vaccines have created public confusion and unwarranted fears about the safety of vaccines.

To counter false information about vaccines, numerous states, including Hawai‘i, have banded together to develop independent, evidence-based health recommendations the public can trust.

In September, Hawai‘i joined with California, Oregon and Washington to form the West Coast Health Alliance (WCHA). Other coalitions include the Northeast Public Health Collaborative and the **Governors Public Health Alliance**, which also includes Hawai‘i.

The WCHA reaffirmed the evidence supporting **vaccine safety** following misleading statements about vaccines and autism and issued recommendations supporting the **hepatitis B vaccine for newborns** and **guidance for the 2025-2026 respiratory virus season**.

Age/Condition	COVID-19	Influenza	RSV
<b>Children</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All 6-23 months</li> <li>• All 2-18 years with risk factors or never vaccinated against COVID-19</li> <li>• All who are in close contact with others with risk factors<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• All who choose protection<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All 6 months and older</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All younger than 8 months<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• All 8-19 months with risk factors</li> </ul>
<b>Pregnancy</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All who are planning pregnancy, pregnant, postpartum or lactating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All who are planning pregnancy, pregnant, postpartum or lactating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 32-36 weeks gestational age<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Adults</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All 65 years and older</li> <li>• All younger than 65 years with risk factors</li> <li>• All who are in close contact with others with risk factors</li> <li>• All who choose protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All 75 years and older</li> <li>• All 50-74 years with risk factors</li> </ul>

1. COVID-19 vaccine is available for persons 6 months and older.

2. Protect infants with either prenatal RSV vaccine or infant dose of nirsevimab or clesrovimab.

These recommendations are in line with trusted national medical associations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Academy of Family Physicians. They also align with DOH's own guidelines, available on our websites (see links below).

With these new recommendations, now would be a good time to review your 'ohana's immunization records. Check with your doctor or visit the sites below.

[DOH RESPIRATORY DISEASE PAGE](#)

[SCHOOL HEALTH REQUIREMENTS](#)

[CHECK YOUR IMMUNIZATION RECORD](#)

## Healthy Moms, Healthy Families: Importance of Prenatal Care





January brings two important observances: **National Maternal Health Awareness Day** and **National Birth Defects Awareness Month** – both reminding us how essential it is to support healthy pregnancies and healthy keiki. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH), early and consistent prenatal care is one of the most effective ways to reduce risks for both mom and baby.

**Prioritize regular prenatal checkups:** Early visits help monitor growth, screen for potential health concerns, and ensure parents receive timely guidance. DOH's Family Health Services Division offers programs statewide to support maternal, infant, and early childhood health.

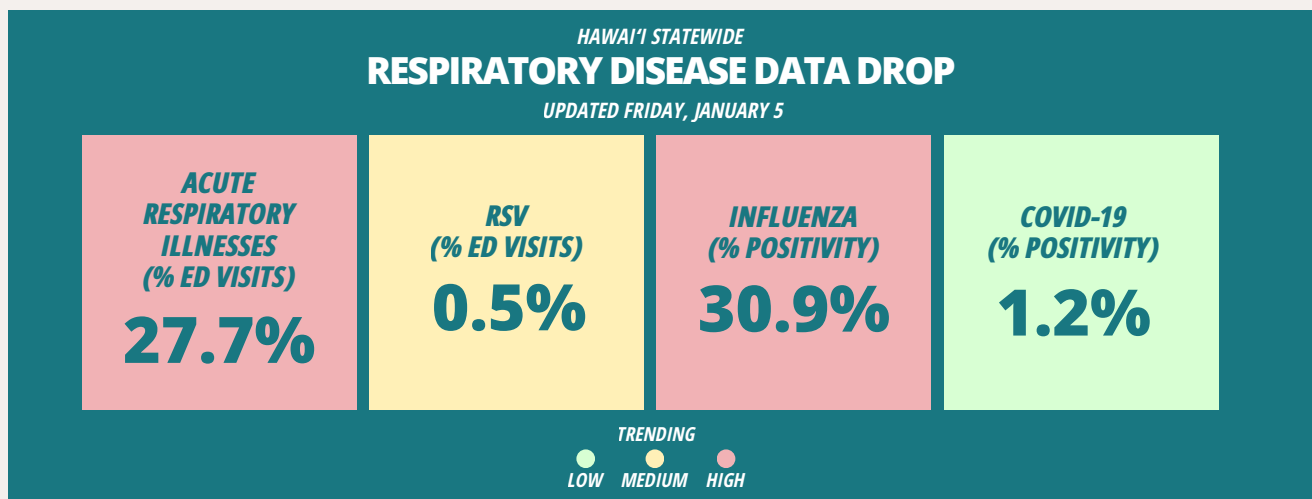
**Choose healthy everyday habits:** Eating balanced meals, taking folic acid as recommended, avoiding alcohol and tobacco, and staying active (as approved by a provider) all contribute to a healthier pregnancy. Managing chronic conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes is also critical.

**Build a support network:** Whether through family, community programs, or local health providers, emotional and cultural support helps parents feel confident and cared for.

Healthy moms help build healthy families, and healthy families strengthen our communities. In honoring these observances, we reaffirm our commitment to supporting parents and welcoming Hawai'i's next generation with the best possible start.

[LEARN MORE](#)

## This Week's RSV and COVID-19 Data



This week's data shows high activity levels for acute respiratory illnesses (27.7% ED visits) and medium activity for RSV (0.5% ED visits). Influenza (30.9% positivity) activity level is high, and COVID-19 (1.2% positivity) activity level remains low.

[RESPIRATORY DISEASE DASHBOARD](#)

## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



### Taking a Break from Alcohol

**Dry January** is a month-long challenge that encourages people to reduce or take a break from alcohol – and many find it's the reset they need after the holidays. Even short periods of alcohol reduction can improve sleep, boost energy, support liver function, and help people learn more about their drinking habits.

Here in Hawai'i, Dry January can be a great opportunity to reconnect with wellness in ways that fit our island lifestyle. Swap pau hana drinks for an evening walk, explore new non-alcoholic beverages (the local options keep getting better!), or try a hobby that helps you unwind without a cocktail in hand.

Research shows participants often experience lasting benefits, like better mood, clearer thinking, and healthier routines – even after the month ends.

Whether you're cutting back or going alcohol-free, Dry January is a simple, supportive way to start 2026 with more clarity, balance, and aloha for your well-being.

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## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



### Getting Mold Under Control

January marks the heart of Hawai'i's rainy season, a time when higher humidity and frequent showers can increase mold inside homes. According to the CDC and DOH, mold can trigger respiratory symptoms, allergies, and asthma – especially for children, kūpuna, and those with weakened immune systems. The good news: a few simple habits can make a big difference.



Keep air moving by opening windows when weather allows, running fans, and using bathroom or kitchen exhaust vents. Check for damp spots around windows, walls, ceilings, under sinks; and wipe up moisture right away. If you use an air conditioner or dehumidifier, clean the filters regularly and keep indoor humidity below 60%, ideally between 30%-50%.

After heavy rains, inspect your home for leaks, make repairs as soon as possible, and ensure gutters and drains are clear so water flows away from the house. If mold does appear, the DOH recommends cleaning nonporous surfaces with soap and water and drying thoroughly. Porous or absorbent surfaces may need to be thrown away. It is important to wear personal protective equipment to protect your mouth, nose, eyes, and skin. However, people at risk of severe health effects from mold exposure and contact should avoid mold cleanup areas.

A little prevention now helps keep your home – and your ‘ohana healthy all season long.

[LEARN MORE](#)

## PUBLIC HEALTH



### Keeping the Viruses Away

Winter is the peak season for respiratory viruses in Hawai‘i, including flu, RSV, and COVID-19. However, a few simple habits can help keep you feeling your best. Vaccinations, good hand hygiene, and staying home when you're sick aren't just about avoiding illness; they're about protecting what matter most to us, the ones we love.

A quick flu or COVID-19 shot now can mean more energy for work and family, fewer missed events, and less worrying about kūpuna or young keiki. Washing hands regularly and giving yourself time to rest when you're under the weather helps your body recover faster, so you can get back to surfing, hiking, or enjoying time with your ‘ohana.

If someone in your household is sick, opening windows for airflow and keeping shared spaces clean can make it easier for everyone to stay healthy.

Taking small steps today helps keep our communities stronger, our holidays brighter, and our winter season worry-free.

[LEARN MORE](#)

## SHORT TAKES

### Blood Donations Save Lives



January is **National Blood Donor Month** – a chance to give the gift of life and support Hawai'i's hospitals. Donating blood is quick, safe, and makes a big difference for patients in need. Whether it's a routine donation or your first time, your generosity helps keep blood supplies ready for surgeries, emergencies, and those managing chronic conditions. Find a local donation center and start the year by helping your community thrive.

[FIND A BLOOD DRIVE NEAR YOU](#)

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### Cervical Cancer Awareness Month





January is **Cervical Cancer Awareness Month**. Each year, more than 13,000 women in the U.S. are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and over 4,000 lose their lives to the disease. Fortunately, cervical cancer is one of the most preventable types of cancer because of an available human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, which is typically recommended at age 11-12 years, but can be give up to age 26 years. Screening tests such as the HPV test and the Pap test help with early detection.

Reduce your risk by talking with your healthcare provider about the HPV vaccine and cervical cancer screening and encourage friends and family to do the same. Taking action now can safeguard well-being for years to come.

LEARN MORE

**\*Please note that our DOH Punchbowl offices will be closed on Monday, Jan. 19, in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day.**

## INFORMATION HOTLINES

### DOCD Disease Reporting Line

O'ahu (808) 586-4586  
Maui (808) 984-8213  
Kaua'i (808) 241-3563  
Hilo (808) 933-0912  
Kona (808) 322-4877

### Hawai'i CARES 988 Hotline

Local crisis counselors are available to help 24/7  
Call or Text 9-8-8  
or Call (808) 832-3100  
or Call 1-800-753-6879

### DOH Hotline

Get information & resources  
Call (808) 586-4400

### Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Hawaii

The go-to source for Medicare Fraud Prevention  
Education and referral assistance for related  
scams.  
Toll Free: 1-800-296-9422  
[info@smphawaii.org](mailto:info@smphawaii.org)

Big mahalo to everyone who shared story ideas with us. We love to hear from you! If there's a topic you'd like us to cover, please let us know at [doh.comm@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:doh.comm@doh.hawaii.gov).

*In Hawaiian, the word olakino refers to the state of health and well-being. The word "ola" means life and health, and the word "kino" means body. Olakino is generally considered to be the greatest wealth and great health that one can attain, not just of the body but holistically. Maika'i in Hawaiian means good or wellbeing.*

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