



OLAKINO MAIKA'I

To Improve Your Health and Well-Being



Explore how DOH protects Hawai'i's health during storms and every day.

Discover the legacy of a pioneering physician who shaped Hawai'i's medical history.

Learn how a cleaner environment can help control asthma and improve breathing.

Each April, as we celebrate Earth Day, we're reminded that a healthy environment is a foundation for public health. At the Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH), protecting that foundation is part of our everyday work, rain or shine – or major storm.

Last month, Kona low storm systems swept across the islands, bringing heavy rains, high winds, flooding and unhealthy environmental impacts. In response, DOH teams mobilized quickly to help keep communities safe, and to spread the word about staying healthy during the post-storm recovery and cleanup.

Staff from across DOH worked together to ensure health care resources and requested assistance remained available throughout the storm.

Cleanup and Environmental Monitoring

Floodwaters can carry contaminants from the environment into homes, yards, and coastal areas. **DOH is testing** flood-carried mud, sediment, and nearshore waters. Wearing personal protective equipment and promptly cleaning mud out of your home and other impacted areas greatly reduces potential risk.

Standing water following a storm can become a breeding ground for mosquitoes and other vectors. DOH's Vector Control Branch is trapping and testing mosquitoes for disease risks, and encourages residents to empty standing water where possible, repair window and door screens, and use insect repellents.

Providing Essential Medical Services

DOH and its partners are providing rapid mobile medical care, telehealth and support services to impacted communities. Public health nurses visited shelters and continue to provide care at the North Shore Community Assistance Center and other locations on O’ahu, and in East Moloka’i.

Replacing Vital Records

DOH’s vital records team is making it easier to replace essential documents. Residents from impacted areas can request one free copy of birth, death, or marriage certificates using online services.

Caring for Mental Health

DOH Behavioral Health staff also visited shelters and continue to provide support. During stressful events, it’s so important to take care of your mental health. Support is available through the Hawai’i CARES crisis line can provide immediate support. Call, text, or chat 988.

DOH staff and resources will continue to support the community as recovery progresses.

While major weather events make our work more visible, DOH's commitment to public and environmental health is ongoing, even behind the scenes. In Hawai’i, caring for our environment is caring for each other. For all of us at DOH, every day is Earth Day.

[CLICK FOR KONA LOW STORM RESOURCES](#)

[ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ADMINISTRATION](#)

MO‘OLELO OLAKINO

History of Health

Dr. Tai Heong Kong



Dr. Tai Heong Kong (seated at left) with family. Photo courtesy of Dr. Kong's family.

This month, we celebrate the birth of one of the earliest doctors to bring Western medicine to Hawai'i. Obstetrician Dr. Tai Heong Kong (Mrs. K.F. Li), was born on April 25, 1875. In 1890, she and her husband, Dr. Li Khai Fai, both doctors, emigrated from Canton (now Guangzhou), in China, to Hawai'i. The two were the first Chinese medical doctors working in Hawai'i.

Kong delivered more than 6,000 infants in her career and in 1946, was featured in a "Ripley's Believe It Or Not" newspaper column. In addition to a medical career and raising nine children, Kong was chair of the Chinese Committee of the American Red Cross, and the president of both the Chinese Church Women's Society and the Honolulu Chinese Orphanage Society. Kong's story has been featured in several books, newspapers and Hawai'i Public Radio.

Kong will be one of 14 honorees whose profiles will be inscribed on the Honolulu Chinatown Kekaulike Archway, a ceremonial arch that is under construction and expected to be completed by July.

CHINATOWN KEKAULIKE ARCHWAY

Cleaner Air, Healthier Breathing, Controlling Asthma in Hawai'i



Asthma affects thousands of people across Hawai'i, including nearly 1 in 10 adults and about 1 in 15 children. While asthma cannot be cured, it can often be controlled by managing symptoms, following a treatment plan, and reducing exposure to environmental triggers.

Many asthma triggers are connected to the environment around us. Common triggers include dust mites, mold, pet dander, cockroaches, and pollen, as well as irritants like tobacco smoke, vape, vog, vehicle exhaust, and strong chemical odors and fumes. Respiratory infections and changing weather conditions can also make symptoms worse.

That's why a healthy environment matters. Simple steps at home, such as improving ventilation, reducing mold and moisture, keeping living spaces clean, and avoiding smoke exposure, can help reduce asthma flare-ups. Cleaner air both indoors and outdoors supports healthier lungs for everyone.

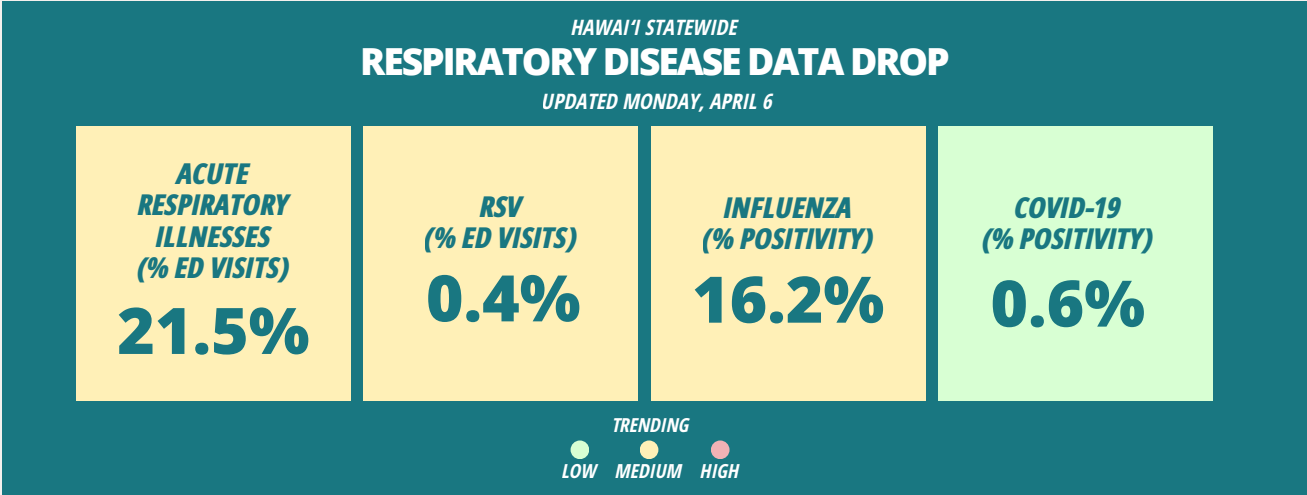
The DOH's **Control Asthma Hawai'i** campaign encourages families to learn their loved ones' personal asthma triggers and work with a healthcare provider to create an **Asthma Action Plan**. This personalized tool, which can be shared with school staff and other caregivers, shows the steps to take for practicing daily care and how to respond if symptoms worsen.

This Earth Day, remember that protecting Hawai'i's environment also protects our health. Cleaner air and healthier homes can help people with asthma breathe easier every day.

CONTROL ASTHMA HAWAII

DOWNLOAD ASTHMA ACTION PLAN

This Week's RSV and COVID-19 Data



This week's data shows medium activity levels for acute respiratory illnesses (21.5% ED visits) and RSV (0.4% ED visits). Influenza (16.2% positivity) activity level is medium, and COVID-19 (0.6% positivity) activity level remains low.

RESPIRATORY DISEASE DASHBOARD

Before starting 7th grade, all students must receive vaccinations and a physical exam



**IT'S THE RULE,
DON'T MISS OUT ON SCHOOL**

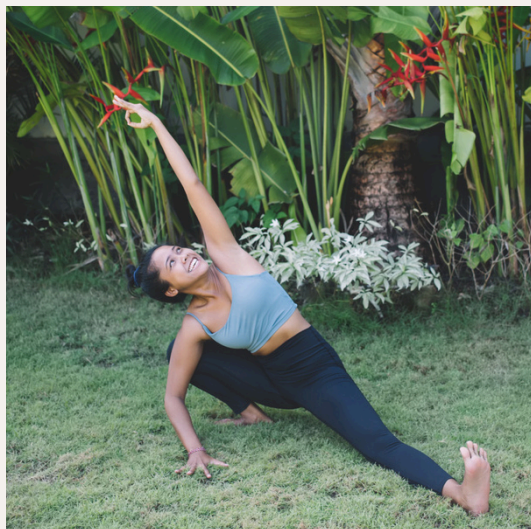


For more information, visit VaxToSchoolHawaii.com

GET VAXXED TODAY!

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Find Calm in Nature



April is Stress Awareness Month, a reminder that taking care of our mental well-being is just as important as caring for our physical health. Stress is a normal part of life, but when it builds up over time it can affect sleep, mood, concentration, and overall health.

One simple and effective way to manage stress is by spending time in nature. Living in Hawai'i gives us many opportunities to reconnect with the outdoors. A walk along the beach, a short hike through a mountain trail, or even sitting in a park and listening to the wind and waves can help calm the mind and reset the body.

Research shows that time outdoors can lower stress hormones, improve mood, and support mental clarity. Even small moments count, like stepping outside during a break, tending a garden, or watching a sunset.

This Earth Month, caring for the environment and caring for yourself can go hand in hand. By protecting Hawai'i's natural spaces, we also preserve places where people can relax, recharge, and find balance.



BEAT STRESS WITH A WALK!

SO STRESSED OUT! FACT SHEET

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Learning to Protect Hawai'i's Health



Each April, **National Environmental Education Week** (April 20-24) encourages communities to learn more about how the environment affects our health and what we can do to protect it. In Hawai'i, caring for our air, water, and land is essential not only for the environment, but also for the well-being of the people who live here.

Environmental education helps residents understand everyday choices that can support healthier communities, like reducing pollution, protecting water quality, and properly disposing of waste. These lessons are especially important in island environments, where natural resources are closely connected to public health.

DOH offers a variety of programs and resources that help communities stay informed. From the Clean Air Branch monitoring air quality to the Clean Water Branch protecting beaches and streams, DOH staff work every day to safeguard the natural systems that support life in Hawai'i.

During Earth Month, Environmental Education Week is a reminder that learning about our environment is one of the first steps toward protecting it, both for today and for future generations.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Protecting the Next Generation



April 20-27 marks **National Infant Immunization Week**, a time to highlight how vaccines help protect babies during their most vulnerable early months of life. Pediatric experts like the American Academy of Pediatrics emphasize that following the recommended childhood immunization schedule is one of the safest and most effective ways to prevent serious diseases.

Infants are still developing their immune systems, which makes early protection especially important. Vaccines help guard against illnesses like measles, whooping cough, and other infections that once caused severe illness in young children. Pediatricians recommend staying on schedule so babies build strong protection at the right time.

As we celebrate Earth Day this month, it's also a reminder that healthy communities begin with healthy families. Just as we care for Hawai'i's environment for future generations, vaccination helps create a healthier future for our keiki. Talk with your child's healthcare provider about recommended vaccines and how they protect your child and the wider community.

VACCINES FOR CHILDREN

HEALTHY CHILDREN

AAP RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT TAKES

Cut Back on Alcohol - You'll Feel Better!

Frequent alcohol use can **increase the risk of injuries, liver disease, heart problems, and mental health challenges.**



April is **Alcohol Awareness Month**, a time to reflect on how alcohol use can affect our health, families, and communities. While many adults choose to drink, heavy or frequent alcohol use can increase the risk of injuries, liver disease, heart problems, and mental health challenges.

Taking small steps can make a difference. Setting limits, planning alcohol-free days, and finding other ways to relax, like spending time outdoors, exercising, or connecting with friends, can support healthier habits.

This Earth Month, think about caring for your whole environment, including your body and mind. Making mindful choices about alcohol can help create healthier communities across Hawai'i.

LEARN MORE

GET HELP

TALK TO YOUR KEIKI

Have a Healthy Week!



April 6-12 is **National Public Health Week**, a time to recognize the people and programs that work every day to protect and improve community health. From monitoring air and water quality to preventing disease, promoting healthy lifestyles, and responding to emergencies, public health helps keep Hawai'i's communities safe and resilient.

At DOH, staff across many programs work behind the scenes to support healthy families, safe environments, and strong health systems.

This week is a reminder that public health is everywhere – in our homes, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods – helping ensure that everyone in Hawai'i has the opportunity to live a healthy life.

EXTRA

Preventing Sexually Transmitted Infections

April is **STI Awareness Month**, a reminder that sexually transmitted infections (STIs) remain common but are often preventable and treatable. Many STIs have few or no symptoms, which is why regular testing is important for anyone who is sexually active. Using protection, limiting partners, and having open conversations with healthcare providers can help reduce risk. Early testing and treatment protect both your health and the health of your partners. The Hawai'i Department of Health encourages residents to stay informed, get tested, and seek care when needed. Taking simple steps can help keep individuals and communities healthier.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

SHOULD YOU GET TESTED FOR STIs?

WHERE TO GET TESTED

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

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.

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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