



OLAKINO MAIKA'I

To Improve Your Health and Well-Being



Storm Recovery
See how communities and DOH came together to recover after recent storms.



Sweet Lies
Discover the hidden sugar in drinks and how it impacts Hawai'i's keiki.



Vax to School
Get your child ready for school with checkups and required vaccinations.



A Lei of Health: How Every Part of DOH Supports Hawai'i's Well-Being



May Day is Lei Day in Hawai'i! A lei is more than a collection of flowers. When strung together, the flowers become an embodiment of care and love, connection and intention.

At the Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH), our various teams – from disease prevention and environmental protection to mental health services and community outreach – work together to form a “lei of health” that supports the well-being of our entire community.

Let's celebrate May Day all month by caring for ourselves and one another. Aloha nui loa!



Bound by Aloha: A Lei of Care After the Storms



Recent storms and floodwaters across Hawai'i tested our communities, but also have highlighted the strength of people coming together in times of great need. Neighbors helped neighbors clear debris, gather supplies, check on kūpuna, and provide shelter to those who were displaced. These acts of kindness and resilience reflect the true spirit of Hawai'i.

DOH mobilized to support impacted communities. Teams provided mental health services for individuals and families coping with stress, loss and uncertainty. Alongside, Public Health Nurses and Medical Reserve Corps volunteers offered first aid and support at shelters. Environmental Health staff **conducted mud and water testing** to help ensure safety, while vector control teams worked to reduce mosquito breeding and prevent the spread of disease. DOH also **issued guidance** on safe cleanup practices, food and water safety, mold and disease precautions, mental health resources, and how to replace lost vital records, including birth, death and marriage certificates.

Even as the skies clear, recovery takes time. It's normal for both physical and emotional effects to linger after a disaster. Support is still available. Residents can find resources, guidance and the latest updates at the link below. Together, Hawai'i continues to move forward – stronger, safer and more connected.

[HAWAII CARES 988](#)

[STORM DAMAGE RESOURCES](#)



MO‘OLELO OLAKINO

History of Health



From First Film to Public Health Messages in Hawai‘i



The first motion picture filmed in Hawai‘i was shot by Edison Photographers in May 1898. The film captured everyday life in the islands, marking the beginning of a new era in visual storytelling. What started as a technological novelty would eventually transform how people share information, connect with one another and understand the world around them.

Today, video plays a vital role in public health communication. On the [DOH YouTube channel](#), recent video messages and stories inform and inspire:

- Our experts explain how to protect your health after major storms...
- How the Aloha Garden at Hawai‘i State Hospital helps patients heal...
- An inspiring story about the rewards of caregiving...
- How DOH community clubhouses train people for productive lives...
- A look at the history of public health in Hawai‘i...

...and much more. From educational campaigns to emergency updates, visual storytelling helps convey complex information in ways that are accessible, engaging and easy to understand. In a diverse state like Hawai‘i, these tools are especially important for reaching communities across languages and cultures.

As technology continues to evolve, so does the way we share health information, building on a legacy that began more than a century ago with Hawai‘i’s first moving images.

DOH joins World Health Organization partnership



GOARN
Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network

The Hawai‘i Department of Health (DOH) recently joined the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN), a worldwide partnership coordinated by the World Health Organization to strengthen responses to public health emergencies.

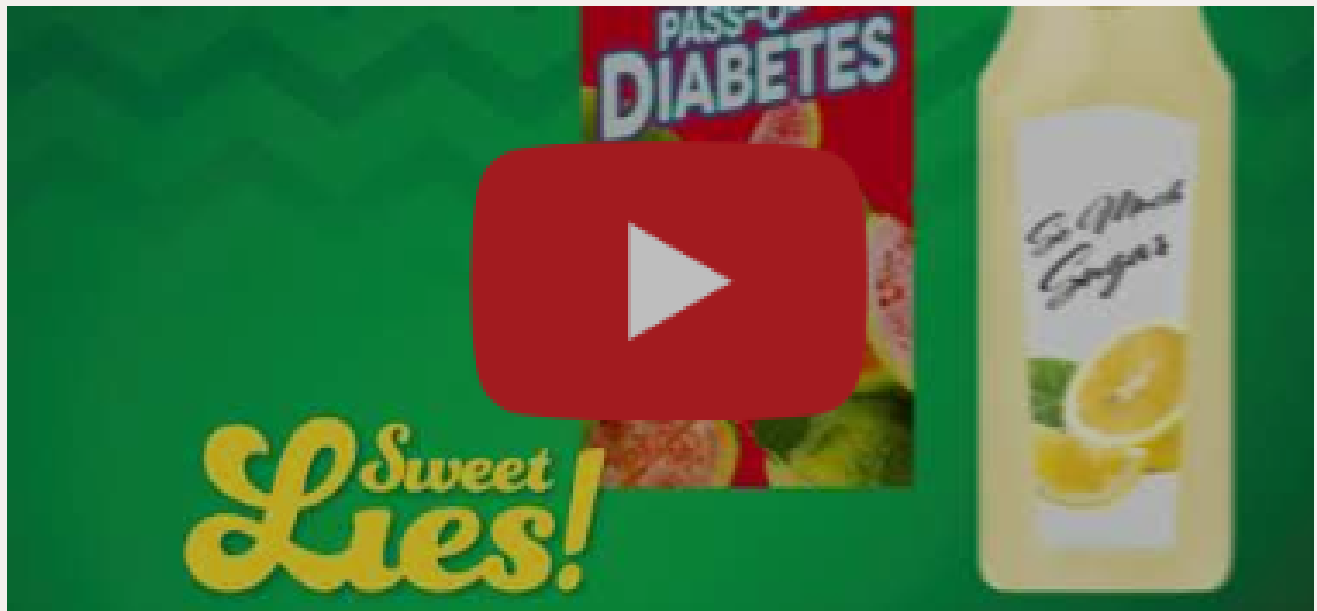
GOARN connects more than 300 institutions – including laboratories, public health agencies and humanitarian organizations – to provide rapid, coordinated support during disease outbreaks, food safety incidents and other health threats. By joining this network, DOH gains access to timely global information while also contributing its own expertise.

Hawai'i's unique location as a hub for international travel makes global collaboration especially important. DOH brings strong experience in disease surveillance, laboratory testing and emergency response across diverse island communities.

Participation in GOARN will help DOH stay informed about emerging health risks and respond more effectively to protect residents and visitors. It also allows Hawai'i to support neighboring regions, particularly across the Pacific, reinforcing a shared commitment to global health security.

[LEARN MORE](#)

"Sweet Lies" Campaign Highlights Hidden Sugar in Keiki Beverages



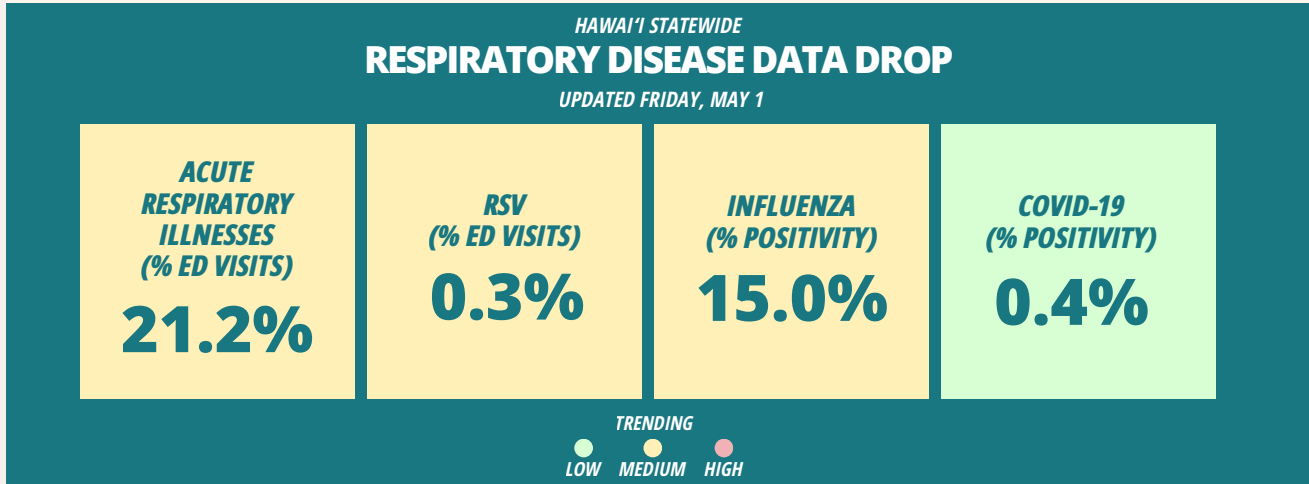
Nearly 1 in 3 school-aged children in Hawai'i is overweight or obese, according to recent data, underscoring a growing public health concern. The Department of Health is responding by relaunching its "Sweet Lies" campaign to raise awareness about the high sugar content in sweetened fruit drinks.

Despite labels like "natural" and "100% vitamin C," many of these beverages contain as much sugar as soda, contributing to tooth decay, early weight gain, and increased risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes. Data also show that more than 75% of Hawai'i's keiki consume at least one sugary drink daily, often starting at a young age. Research found that while most parents recognize soda as unhealthy, many are unaware that sweetened fruit drinks can be just as harmful. These misconceptions are often driven by misleading packaging and marketing.

The campaign runs through May 15 across multiple platforms and encourages families to choose healthier options like water or unflavored milk.

[INFORMATION FOR PARENTS](#)

This Week's Respiratory Disease Data



This week's data shows medium activity levels for acute respiratory illnesses (21.2% ED visits) and RSV (0.3% ED visits). Influenza (15.0% positivity) activity level is medium, and COVID-19 (0.4% positivity) activity level remains low.

RESPIRATORY DISEASE DASHBOARD



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Mental Health Matters for All of Hawai'i



May is **Mental Health Month**, a time to recognize that mental health is an essential part of overall well-being for individuals, families and communities across Hawai'i.

Mental health affects how we think, feel and act. It also influences how we handle stress, relate to others and make decisions.

Periods of change, such as the end of the school year, transitions at work or recovering from recent events, can take a toll on emotional well-being. Recognizing the signs of stress, anxiety or depression and seeking support early can make a meaningful difference.

Simple actions can help support mental wellness, including staying connected with loved ones, getting enough sleep, being physically active and taking time to rest and recharge. Just as important is knowing when to reach out for help. Support is available, and seeking care is a sign of strength.

The DOH encourages residents to prioritize mental health, check in with one another and access available resources to support a healthier, more resilient Hawai'i.

The DOH Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division will celebrate the month with events for keiki and their caregivers, including sign waving, lighting up buildings in green, and a Resource Fair. Visit [keikimentalhealthmatters.com](https://www.keikimentalhealthmatters.com) for more information. The DOH Adult Mental Health Division will host a mental health fair at Windward Community College on May 6, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

STATEWIDE EVENTS

ADULT MENTAL HEALTH

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

GET HELP NOW

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Protecting Respiratory Health in Hawai'i



May is **Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month**, highlighting the importance of clean air and respiratory health. Asthma and allergies affect many Hawai'i residents, especially keiki, and the factors that make asthma symptoms worse, called "triggers," can vary from person to person.

Some environmental asthma triggers include allergens (such as roaches, dust mites, and mold), vog, smoke and vape. Other common triggers include respiratory infections, health conditions, exercise, certain medicines, and intense emotions.

Simple steps can help reduce risk, including keeping indoor spaces clean and dry, limiting exposure to known allergens, and following an [Asthma Action Plan](#) if you or your child has asthma. After storms or flooding, it's especially important to address moisture and mold quickly to prevent respiratory issues.

Managing asthma and allergies helps keiki stay active, attend school regularly, and maintain a better quality of life. Early awareness and prevention are key to keeping Hawai'i's families healthy.

LEARN MORE

PUBLIC HEALTH

Seventh-Grade Checkups and Vaccinations Protect Hawai'i's Keiki



It's the Rule, Don't Miss Out on School!

The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) is urging parents of incoming seventh-grade students to schedule a well-child visit and ensure required vaccinations are up-to-date before the 2026-2027 school year. Annual checkups help to monitor a child's physical, emotional and developmental health and are recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

AAP RECOMMENDATIONS



SHORT TAKES

Honoring Hawai'i's Nurses



May is **National Nurses Month**, a time to recognize the vital role nurses play in keeping Hawai'i healthy. From hospitals and clinics to schools and communities, nurses are often the first point of care, providing treatment, education and support to patients and families. Their work spans preventive care, emergency response and long-term health management. In public health, nurses help track disease, administer vaccines and respond during emergencies. Their dedication, compassion and expertise make a lasting difference every day. This month, we celebrate and thank Hawai'i's nurses for their commitment to caring for our communities.

Contributing to Medical Cannabis Research



Johns Hopkins medical research teams working together to understand how drugs and behavior impact health.

The DOH Office of Medical Cannabis Control and Regulation (OMCCR) is partnering with the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine (JHM) on two national research studies examining the health impacts of medical cannabis across the U.S. and in Hawai'i.

Thinking about using cannabis? Hawai'i patients who are beginning medical cannabis use and are cannabis-naïve are invited to enroll in the **National Cannabis Study (NCS)**. The study aims to better understand who uses cannabis therapies, the conditions they treat, the types of products used, and how cannabis affects health, sleep, pain, mood, and medication use. Participants may also volunteer to provide blood samples for biomarker analysis at no cost, and they will receive results, including liver function, diabetes, and inflammation markers, to review with their healthcare providers.

Already using cannabis? Patients who are already using cannabis or hemp may join JHM and Realm of Caring's **Observational Research Registry (ORR)**, a global effort that tracks both users and non-users over time to build a comprehensive dataset on product use, benefits, and adverse effects. Participants in this registry will not provide lab samples.

Why participate? It's an opportunity to contribute to scientific research aimed at better understanding both the health benefits and possible risks associated with cannabis or hemp use. You will also join a community that understands cannabinoid therapy and gain ongoing support from Care Specialists at the Realm of Caring.

No government entity will have access to your personal information from this research.

Move More, Feel Better This May



May is **National Physical Fitness and Sports Month**, a reminder that regular physical activity is key to a healthy lifestyle. Staying active helps reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and obesity, while also improving mental health and overall well-being.

In Hawai'i, there are many ways to stay active: walking in your neighborhood, swimming, hiking, paddling, or dancing hula. For keiki, daily movement supports healthy growth and development, especially as the school year ends and routines change.

Adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate activity each week, while children should be active every day. Small steps can make a big difference. Find activities you enjoy and make movement part of your daily routine.

Takes Steps Toward a Tobacco-Free Hawai'i



May 31 marks **World No Tobacco Day**, highlighting the harmful effects of tobacco use. Smoking and vaping increase the risk of heart disease, cancer, and respiratory illness, and exposure to secondhand smoke can also impact the health of others. Quitting tobacco can lead to immediate and long-term health benefits, including improved lung function and reduced disease risk. Support is available to help individuals, including counseling and quit programs. Protecting yourself and your 'ohana from tobacco is an important step toward a healthier Hawai'i.

[HAWAII TOBACCO QUITLINE](#)



EXTRA

Know Your Numbers, Protect Your Heart

May 17 is **World Hypertension Day**, a timely reminder to check your blood pressure and take steps to protect your heart. It's important to work with your health care professional to manage your blood pressure. High blood pressure often has no noticeable symptoms, but can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke if left unmanaged. Healthy habits such as eating a balanced diet, reducing sodium intake, staying physically active, not smoking, and managing stress can help keep blood pressure in a healthy range. Regular checkups and monitoring your blood pressure at home are important for early detection and management. Knowing your numbers is a simple step that can make a big difference in your long-term health.

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (top/upper number)	and/or	DIASTOLIC mm Hg (bottom/lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120 – 129	and	LESS THAN 80
STAGE 1 HYPERTENSION (High Blood Pressure)	130 – 139	or	80 – 89
STAGE 2 HYPERTENSION (High Blood Pressure)	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
SEVERE HYPERTENSION (If you don't have symptoms*, call your health care professional.)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120
HYPERTENSIVE EMERGENCY (If you have any of these symptoms*, call 911.)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

*symptoms: chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, numbness, weakness, change in vision or difficulty speaking

Source: American Heart Association

Please note that our DOH Punchbowl offices will be closed on Monday, May 25 in observance of Memorial 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

DOH Hotline

Get information & resources
 Call (808) 586-4400

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

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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