

Infectious Disease Timeline

100 Years of Public Health



Early 1800s and Before – *As formidable as any other threat to the pioneers in the new Arkansas Territory was the threat of infectious disease. Smallpox, yellow fever and measles, and malaria epidemics had nearly wiped out the Native American population in Arkansas and the rest of the country before the Civil War.*

Dawn of the 20th century – *Arkansans still faced the prospect of deadly illness – cholera, chicken pox, diphtheria, meningitis, gonorrhea, hookworm, influenza, leprosy, malaria, measles, typhoid fever, pellagra, plague, smallpox, syphilis, tuberculosis, anthrax, whooping cough, and yellow fever - that held average life expectancies to under 50 years.*

Hookworm was a prevalent infection in the southern U.S. , where sanitary living conditions and access to shoes were minimal.

John D. Rockefeller, Sr. believed it was possible to prevent the disease, so, along with his Foundation for Human Welfare, he awarded a \$1 million grant to the southern states and the Sanitary Commission for the eradication of hookworm disease.

February 25, 1913 – *The first permanent Arkansas Board of Health was founded as a part of the requirement for funding by the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission.*

Public health workers were sent into the field to educate communities about hookworm, perform diagnostic tests, and provide Epsom salt and thymol treatment for those who tested positive.

During 1913 – *It was during this time that privy inspectors came into being. Prior to this time in many rural areas, people defecated at random on the grounds near their homes.*

Sanitation staff worked regularly to keep the privies clean and to make sure they met the new standards. Children, once sick and frail, sprang back to good health and were restored to a normal weight.

In 1915 – *As the connection between malaria and mosquitoes was recognized, an outbreak of malaria occurred in Crossett, Arkansas.*

The state's new Board of Health and State Department of Health, along with the Rockefeller Commission and the U.S. Public Health Service, set out to completely rid the town of malaria by eliminating or controlling the breeding sites of mosquitos.

In a two-year period from 1915 to 1917, physicians' calls for malaria dropped from a high of 2,500 to only 200 – a 92 percent decrease.

Since the early 1900s – Many other significant infectious diseases have taken the stage. Most notably, tuberculosis, influenza, and sexually-transmitted diseases have taken their toll.

In 1919 – *The Board of Health began a vigorous educational campaign against venereal disease after thousands of Arkansans were found to be infected, and as a result, were unable to join the Army during WWI.*

1960s through 1970s – *Perhaps the most dramatic and ground-breaking public health work in the state's history came from research done during the 1960s and 1970s by Arkansas-based doctors Paul Reagan, William Stead, and Joseph Bates, which led to a new local hospital and out-patient treatment for tuberculosis (TB).*

continued on back →



Infectious Disease Timeline continued

In 1981 – First diagnosed in 1981, HIV has taken the lives of more than 2,800 Arkansans. The constant themes of fear, stigma, and low health literacy marked this epidemic as deeply as any other in our history.

Federal dollars, in the form of Ryan White funds, now provide medication to many of those living with HIV, and modern treatments are effective enough to move this illness, once diagnosed as a death sentence, to a category that more closely resembles a chronic disease.

2009 – The H1N1 influenza A virus caused a global pandemic.

During this year, there were 54 deaths from H1N1 influenza in Arkansas. Our state attracted national attention with its ability to vaccinate children against the flu. During the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, with the help of volunteers and funds provided by the CDC and the state legislature, the Health Department conducted flu clinics in almost 1,100 schools and mass flu clinics in all counties. More than 700,000 doses of H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccine were administered in school and mass flu clinics and local health units statewide.



HELP FIGHT the flu in Arkansas!

Flu is serious and can cause illness in any age-group. Don't be confused about the **regular seasonal flu** and the new **H1N1 influenza A (Swine) flu**. During our regular flu season this fall, the same basic steps and precautions should be taken to be prepared for any type of flu virus.



All Arkansans are encouraged to get a seasonal flu shot each year.
The best time to be immunized is between mid-October and mid-November. The seasonal flu shot WILL NOT protect you against the new H1N1 (Swine) flu.

It is important for every Arkansan to get both the seasonal and H1N1 flu shot this flu season. The new H1N1 flu shots are recommended first for priority groups most at risk. However, there will be enough H1N1 vaccine available for anyone who wants a flu shot.

A flu shot will not give you the flu.
Flu shots are vaccines that help protect you from getting the flu. Help Fight the Flu in Arkansas – Practice the 3 C's:



- ✓ **Clean** – wash your hands often
- ✓ **Cover** – cover your cough and sneeze
- ✓ **Contain** – stay home if you are sick

For more information on seasonal flu and the new H1N1 flu go to: www.healthylarkansas.com

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