

NOVEMBER 8, 2023

# MCHD HEALTH BLOG

*The greatest wealth of a community is the health of the people.*



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.  
**MORGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPT.**



## PIONEERS OF PUBLIC HEALTH

As we get closer to Thanksgiving, we can count some of the blessings left to us by Pioneers in Public Health. In 1799, the World Health Organization declared smallpox an eradicated disease. This was the result of coordinated Public Health efforts, with vaccination being an essential component. Thanks to Dr. Edward Jenner and his now famous 1796 experiment on eight-year-old James Phipps. Dr. Jenner inserted pus taken from a cowpox pustule and inserted it into an incision on the boy's arm. He was testing his theory that milkmaids who suffered the mild disease of cowpox never contracted the deadly smallpox. Jenner subsequently proved that having been inoculated with cowpox Phipps was immune to smallpox. In 1798, his results were finally published and Jenner coined the word vaccine from the Latin 'vacca' for cow.

We can also be thankful for Dr. Lucy Wills and her discovery and research of folate that built the groundwork for the synthesis and benefits of folic acid supplements. Center for Disease Control (CDC) urges women to take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day, starting at least one month before getting pregnant, to reduce the risk of major birth defects of the baby's brain and spine (anencephaly and spina bifida) by 50% to 70%. Folic acid is a B vitamin. Our bodies use it to make new cells. Everyone needs folic acid every day, whether you're planning to get pregnant or not, for the healthy new cells the body makes daily. Think about the skin, hair, and nails. These – and other parts of the body – make new cells each day.

Another person who left a mark on Public Health history is Typhoid Mary. Mary Mallon was the picture of health. Although she harbored the extremely contagious bacteria that cause typhoid fever, Mallon never demonstrated any of its symptoms -- which include fever, headaches and diarrhea. Individuals can develop typhoid fever after ingesting food or water contaminated during handling by a human carrier. The human carrier may be a healthy person who has survived a previous episode of typhoid fever yet who continues to shed the associated bacteria, *Salmonella typhi*, in feces and urine. Washing hands with soap & warm water and donning single-use gloves before touching food; sanitizing dishes with an approved solution of chlorine or ammonia; along with proper temperature controls are steps toward preventing foodborne illness. Ohio has mandated that medical providers report patients with illnesses that can be spread through food handling. The Ohio Disease Reporting System (ODRS) is monitored by state, regional, and local public health professionals. Further, every licensed food operator is mandated to inform employees of the requirement to report to their supervisor information about their health as it relates to illnesses that are transmissible through food. This allows a supervisor an opportunity to reduce risk of a foodborne outbreak by either excluding or restricting duties.