



BARTON COUNTY

Public Health

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Laboratory Services

DECEMBER

2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 BCHD Staff Meeting 8:00 AM	2 BT CO Commission MTG 9:00AM	3	4	5 CLOSED -Staff Inservice Day-	6
7 BCHD Staff Meeting 8:00 AM	8	9	10 Breastfeeding Support Group 4:00 PM	11	12	13
14 BCHD Staff Meeting 8:00 AM	15	16 BT CO Commission MTG 9:00AM	17	18 Advisory Committee Meeting 11:30-12:30PM	19	20
21 BCHD Staff Meeting 8:00 AM	22 BT CO Commission MTG 9:00AM	23	24 Merry Christmas	25	26	27
28 BCHD Staff Meeting 8:00 AM	29	30 BT CO Commission MTG 9:00AM	31			



Healthy Holidays, Healthy Community

December brings joy, busy schedules, family gatherings, travel, and lots of seasonal treats. It's also a time when flu and other illnesses, winter injuries, and stress can increase. Public health helps keep the season safer by preventing disease spread, promoting safe celebrations, and supporting overall well-being.

- **World AIDS Day (Dec. 1)** – A day to remember those lost to HIV/AIDS and promote prevention, testing, and treatment.
- **Safe Toys and Gifts Month (all December)** – Encourages choosing age-appropriate, non-toxic, and safe toys to prevent injuries.
- **Impaired/Drunk Driving Prevention Month (all December)** – Reminds everyone to drive sober and plan safe rides during holiday events.
- **National Influenza Vaccination Week (early December)** – A push to get flu shots before flu season peaks.
- **National Handwashing Awareness Week (early December)** – Highlights handwashing as a simple way to stop germs.

December can be a “high-risk” month for health because:

- More indoor gatherings mean germs spread faster.
- Holiday travel and winter roads raise the chance of crashes and injuries.
- Large meals and potlucks increase the need for food safety.
- Stress and loneliness can affect mental health during the season.

Public health works year-round to share prevention tips, track illness trends, and support a safer community—especially during busy holiday weeks.

Prevent winter illness

- Get your flu shot if you haven't already.
- Wash hands often, especially before eating or cooking.
- Stay home when sick to protect others.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.

Celebrate safely

- Plan a sober ride home after parties.
- Drive carefully in winter weather: slow down, buckle up, and stay alert.
- Pick safe gifts for kids (check age labels, avoid choking hazards).

Care for your body and mind

- Enjoy treats, but aim for balance with water and nutritious meals.
- Keep moving—even a short walk helps energy and stress.
- Try to get good sleep.
- Reach out to friends, family, or support services if the season feels heavy.

Explore additional information regarding these highlights and more in the featured articles in this newsletter!

Please feel free to visit the department in person or call 620-793-1902 if you have any questions.

As always, thank you for your support of Public Health!!



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Barton County Health Department

Merry Christmas & Holiday Office Closures

Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas from all of us at the Barton County Health Department! We hope your holiday season is filled with peace, joy, and good health.

Please note our holiday closures:

- Wednesday, December 24
- Thursday, December 25
- Thursday, January 1

We will reopen with normal hours on Friday, December 26, following December 25th, and again on Friday, January 2, following January 1st.

Thank you for your understanding. We appreciate the opportunity to serve our community. Have a safe and happy holiday season!

It's Not Too Late

Flu vaccination can help prevent hospitalization and death

National Influenza Vaccination Week

December 1-5, 2025



National Influenza Vaccination Week: It's Not Too Late!

December is here, and so is National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW)—a reminder that it's not too late to get your flu shot. Even if you didn't get vaccinated earlier this season, getting one now can still help protect you through the winter months.

Flu activity often peaks later in the season, and vaccination remains the best way to lower your risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and complications.

Why get vaccinated now?

- Protection builds over about two weeks, so early December is a great time to prepare for holiday gatherings and travel.
- Vaccination helps protect you and the people around you, especially older adults, young children, pregnant people, and anyone with chronic health conditions.

Bottom line:

Give yourself (and your loved ones) the gift of health this season. If you haven't had a flu shot yet, there's still time—and it still matters.



Mental Health During the Holidays

The holidays can be full of joy and connection—but they can also bring stress, loneliness, grief, or pressure to “make everything perfect.” If this season feels heavy, you’re not alone. Taking care of your mental health is just as important as taking care of your physical health.

Common holiday stressors include:

- Busy schedules and financial strain
- Family conflict or unrealistic expectations
- Grief or missing loved ones
- Feeling isolated or overwhelmed

Ways to protect your mental well-being:

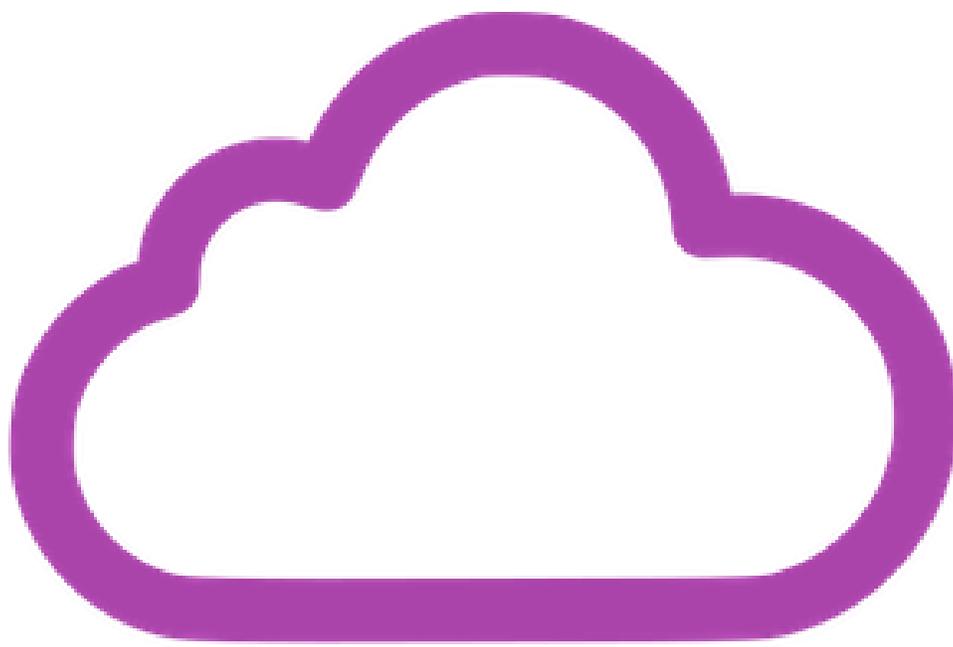
- Keep expectations realistic. Holidays don't have to be perfect to be meaningful.
- Stick to basics when you can. Regular meals, sleep, and movement help stabilize mood.
- Set boundaries. It's okay to say no, leave early, or take quiet time.
- Stay connected. Call a friend, join a community event, or reach out to someone you trust.
- Make space for feelings. If you're grieving or stressed, allow yourself to feel it without guilt.
- Take breaks from social media. Constant comparisons can add pressure.

If you need extra support:

Talking to a counselor, faith leader, doctor, or trusted person can help. If you or someone you know is in crisis, call or text 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline—free, confidential, and available 24/7.

This season, let's remember: it's okay to slow down, ask for help, and care for your mind as well as your body.

You matter, and support is always available.



PurpleAir

♥ Barton County Health Department Installs PurpleAir Sensor

The Barton County Health Department is excited to announce the installation of a PurpleAir sensor to help monitor local air quality in real time.

This tool provides up-to-date information on air pollution levels, allowing residents to make informed decisions—especially those with asthma, allergies, or other respiratory conditions. Monitoring air quality helps our community stay safe and healthy year-round.

You can view current Barton County air quality data by visiting www.purpleair.com or by going to the Barton County website and selecting the Health section.

Stay informed and breathe easier with Barton County Health! 🌬️

Visit our Website



Green Holidays = Happy Holidays.”

The holidays are a season of giving — and that can include giving a little love to our planet, too! With extra shopping, wrapping, and gatherings, December can create a lot more waste than usual. The good news? A few small “green” swaps can keep the holidays joyful and eco-friendly.

Try these easy holiday-friendly Reduce, Reuse, Recycle tips:

Reduce the Holiday Waste

- Pick gifts with less packaging, or give experiences like movie passes, zoo trips, or homemade coupons.
- Go digital for cards when you can, or choose recycled paper options.
- Plan meals with a list to avoid food waste (and save money!).

Reuse with a Festive Twist

- Reuse gift bags, bows, tin boxes, and ribbons year after year.
- Turn old holiday cards into gift tags or decorations.
- Use washable plates, cups, and napkins for gatherings when possible.

Recycle Right After the Fun

- Break down and recycle cardboard shipping boxes.
- Recycle paper wrapping if it’s not glittery or foiled. (Those usually go in the trash.)
- Rinse cans and containers before recycling to keep bins clean.

A greener holiday doesn’t have to be perfect — it just has to be intentional. Every reused bag, recycled box, and reduced waste choice helps protect our air, water, and community health.

Let’s celebrate a season that’s bright for our families and our future. 🌲♻️

Barton County Health Department

OPEN HOURS

Monday	9:00AM-6:00PM
Tuesday	8:00AM-6:00PM
Wednesday	8:00AM-6:00PM
Thursday	8:00AM-6:00PM
Friday	8:00AM-12:00PM
Saturday	Closed
Sunday	Closed

Monday-Thursday Open 12:00PM-1:00PM

Protein Packed Shepherd's Pie Soup



- 2 lbs russet potatoes or white sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 1 Tbsp grass-fed butter or ghee
- sea salt and ground pepper, to taste
- 1 lb ground lamb, ground beef, ground chicken, ground turkey, ground pork or a combination of these
- 1 large sweet onion, diced
- 5 celery ribs, finely chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 Tbsp Italian seasoning
- 2 tsps dried thyme
- 12 oz bag mixed frozen mixed vegetables
- 6 cups chicken or beef bone broth
- 1 cup organic grass-fed Greek yogurt, or sour cream, room temperature

Topping suggestions:

- freshly shredded cheddar cheese
- freshly chopped parsley
- chopped green onions

Instructions

- Set your Greek yogurt/sour cream and frozen vegetables on the counter. The dairy will combine with your hot soup better if it's not cold. Allow the frozen veggies to begin thawing a bit.
- Boil your potatoes in salted water until tender (about 20 minutes), then drain all the liquid. Remove about half of your cooked potatoes and set aside. Mash the remaining potatoes in the pot with the butter or ghee. Season lightly with sea salt and pepper to your taste.
- Meanwhile, in a large stockpot or Dutch oven, add your ground meat of choice and cook, mincing it with a wooden spoon.

- Drain any excessive grease and season lightly with sea salt and ground pepper. Stir in the diced onion, celery, garlic, and seasonings then cook while stirring for a few more minutes.
- Add the frozen vegetables and stir well to combine. Add your bone broth and bring everything to a boil, then reduce to low and simmer for 10 minutes.
- Stir in the mashed potatoes and the remaining un-mashed potatoes and simmer for about 5 minutes.
- Add your Greek yogurt or sour cream and stir until combined, then remove the pot from heat.
- Garnish with freshly cracked pepper, parsley, green onions and enjoy!

WHAT WOULD YOU

GAIN IF YOU

QUIT VAPING?



Text "Start" to 36072
Free, confidential help.
Just for teens.

MY LIFE MY QUIT™



A last-minute gift idea for the whole family.

If you ever thought about quitting smoking, here's a gift from the Kansas Tobacco Quitline. It includes coaching and a plan designed just for you. You may even be eligible for free medication to make quitting less difficult. A tobacco-free life is a gift everyone deserves.

KanQuit!

1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669)

KSquit.org

Contact Us



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Barton County Health Department | 1300 Kansas Ave. | Great Bend, KS 67530 US

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