Stay Healthy Over the Holiday Seasons!

With the holidays upon us, it is easy to put aside our health as we focus on celebrating the season with family and friends. But the holidays fall in the middle of the annual flu season; close quarters, stress and lack of sleep during this time of year can make us more vulnerable to illness increasing the need to avoid the spread of germs.

One of the most important steps a person can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others is keeping their hands clean. Adults and children should wash their hands often, especially after coughing or sneezing.

**Hand washing is simple! Just follow these steps:**

- Wet your hands with clean running water and apply soap. Use warm water if it is available.
- Rub hands together to make a lather and scrub all surfaces.
- Continue rubbing hands for 20 seconds. This is about the time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice through.
- Rinse hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a paper towel or air dryer. Sharing cloth towels can spread germs.
- If possible, use a paper towel to turn off the faucet and open the door.

In addition to hand washing, there are several other good health habits to practice now and throughout the rest of the winter season that can help your body stay healthy and fight off the flu and other illness. **Public health professionals in Michigan recommend the following:**

- Eat a balanced diet including plenty of vegetables, fruits and whole grain products.
- Drink plenty of water and go easy on salt, sugar, alcohol and saturated fat.
- Exercise regularly. Thirty or more minutes of physical activity most days of the week can help boost your immunity.
- Get plenty of rest. Sleep is shown to help your body fight off illness.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread this way.
- Stay away from people who are sick as much as you can.
- If you get sick, stay home from work or school.

At this time of year, sickness and disease are the last things anyone should have to worry about, which is precisely why we should not let preventable health conditions get in the way.

*Public Health: “Keeping Your Heart Strong and Healthy During the Winter Season”*
Winter Weather Tips for Cardiac Patients

For most people, shoveling snow may not lead to any health problems. However, the risk of a heart attack during snow shoveling may increase for some, especially those in poor physical condition or those with existing heart disease or a personal history of stroke.

The combination of colder temperatures and physical activity increases the workload on the heart. People outdoors in cold weather should avoid sudden exertion, like lifting a heavy shovel full of snow. Even walking through heavy, wet snow or snow drifts can strain a person’s heart.

To help make snow removal safer, here is a list of practical tips.

- **Give yourself a break.** Take frequent rest breaks during shoveling so you don’t overstress your heart. Pay attention to how your body feels during those breaks.
- **Don’t eat a heavy meal prior or soon after shoveling.** Eating a large meal can put an extra load on your heart.
- **Use a small shovel or consider a snow thrower.** The act of lifting heavy snow can raise blood pressure acutely during the lift. It is safer to lift smaller amounts more times, than to lug a few huge shovelfuls of snow. When possible, simply push the snow.
- **Learn the heart attack warning signs and listen to your body,** but remember this: Even if you’re not sure it’s a heart attack, have it checked out (tell a doctor about your symptoms). Minutes matter! Fast action can save lives — maybe your own. Don’t wait more than five minutes to call 9-1-1.
- **Don’t drink alcoholic beverages before or immediately after shoveling.** Alcohol may increase a person’s sensation of warmth and may cause them to underestimate the extra strain their body is under in the cold.
- **Consult a doctor.** If you have a medical condition, don’t exercise on a regular basis or are middle aged or older, meet with your doctor prior to exercising in cold weather.

Be aware of the dangers of hypothermia. Heart failure causes most deaths in hypothermia. To prevent hypothermia, dress in layers of warm clothing, which traps air between layers forming a protective insulation. Wear a hat because much of your body’s heat can be lost through your head.

Learn CPR. Effective bystander CPR, provided immediately after sudden cardiac arrest, can double or triple a victim’s chance of survival. Hands-only CPR makes it easier than ever to save a life. If an adult suddenly collapses, call 9-1-1 and begin pushing hard and fast in the middle of the victim’s chest until help arrives.

(Source: American Heart Association)
WHAT IS HPV?
HPV is human papillomavirus. HPV is a common virus—more than half of sexually active men and women are infected with HPV at some time. At any time there are approximately 79 million people in the U.S. with HPV.

Some types of HPV may cause symptoms like genital warts. Other types cause cervical lesions which, over a period of time, can develop into cancer if undetected. However, most people have no symptoms of HPV infection, which means they have no idea they have HPV. In most cases, HPV is harmless and the body clears most HPV infections naturally.

HPV AND CERVICAL CANCER
According to the National Cancer Institute, more than 12,000 women in the U.S. will be diagnosed cervical cancer this year and about 4,000 of these women will die. Most women with an HPV infection will not develop cervical cancer, but it’s very important to have regular screening tests, including Pap and HPV tests as recommended.

Cervical cancer is preventable if precancerous cell changes are detected and treated early, before cervical cancer develops. Cervical cancer usually takes years to progress. This is why getting screened on a regular basis is important; screening can usually catch any potential problems before they progress.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PAP AND HPV TESTS?
A Pap test is a test to find abnormal cell changes on the cervix (cervical dysplasia) before they have a chance to turn into cancer. A small brush or cotton tipped applicator will be used to take a sample of cervical cells. These cells are examined for abnormal cell changes. Experts recommend that Pap tests begin no earlier than age 21.

Unlike Pap tests, which look for abnormal cervical cell changes, an HPV test can detect “high-risk” types of HPV. “High risk” types of HPV can lead to cervical cancer and this test helps healthcare providers know which women are at greatest risk. Experts recommend using both the HPV test and Pap test with women ages 30-65. HPV tests can also be used with younger women who have unclear Pap test results.) For women with normal Pap/HPV test results, co-testing should be repeated once every five years.

HPV VACCINES
Two HPV vaccines are currently on the market and both are approved for use with girls and young women. One vaccine is also approved for use with boys and young men. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends routine HPV vaccination for males and females ages 11-12, with “catch up” vaccination for those ages 13-26.

Being vaccinated against HPV makes it much less likely a woman will develop cervical cancer, or have precancerous cervical cell changes. HPV vaccines don’t protect against all types of HPV, though, so women need to continue having Pap tests and, as appropriate, HPV tests even after being vaccinated for HPV.

TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR HEALTH
A majority of women diagnosed with cervical cancer either have never had a Pap test or did not have one in the previous five years. Cervical cancer is completely preventable if precancerous cell changes are detected and treated early, before cervical cancer develops. Regular Pap tests, supplemented by HPV testing, will detect virtually all pre-cancerous changes and cervical cancers.

LEARN MORE ABOUT HPV AND CERVICAL CANCER
WWW.NCCC-ONLINE.ORG
WWW.ASHASEXUALHEALTH.ORG

To learn more, or to schedule an appointment, contact the Health Department at 774-1868 or 265-9913.
Emergency Preparedness News Update!

The Emergency Preparedness Program is charged with planning for disasters that may occur in our communities. These disasters include weather related winter storms, tornadoes, or severe wind storms, transportation accidents involving chemicals, communicable disease outbreaks e.g. pandemic influenza and man-made disasters involving biological agents, chemicals, and other acts of terrorism.

Responsibilities within the program include educating the community in personal preparedness. Emergency responders will not be able to attend to everyone caught up in a disaster. Individuals and families need to be prepared to evacuate or to shelter in place for at least 7 days. The Emergency Preparedness Coordinators, Beth Tappy and Carol Thornton, provided the following emergency preparedness education to groups during the fall of 2012 and through 2013:

- The County Boards and the Dickinson Iron Collaborative Board
- Woodland Girl Scout Troop to earn a Preparedness Badge
- The Iron Mountain and Iron County Clergy Associations
- Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Kingsford
- Bay College LPN Nursing Students
- Kiwanis Club of Dickinson County