Protecting Yourself against Harmful Bites and Bacteria

As Michigan residents enjoy camping, swimming, and fresh homegrown food this summer, health officials are reminding everyone to reduce their risk of exposure to bacteria and viruses that can cause illness. The Dickinson-Iron District Health Department is kicking off a month long awareness campaign to inform local residents about what they can do to prevent illness and what the health department is doing to protect the health of Dickinson and Iron County residents and visitors.

Be aware of potential infection from various sources during the summer months, but do not let it keep you from enjoying the many activities that the Counties have to offer for fun and recreation. You can protect yourself and your family by taking special precautions.

Michigan residents should be aware of and protect themselves from illnesses such as Lyme disease, rabies and West Nile virus. Lyme disease is a bacterial infection resulting from the bite of an infected deer tick. Early symptoms may include a distinctive rash at the site of the tick bite, fever, headache, fatigue, eye symptoms and muscle/joint pain. The Michigan Department of Community Health’s website has lots of information on Lyme disease and prevention strategies. These include wearing light, long clothing that allows ticks to be spotted more easily, staying on trails and groomed paths in wooded and tall, grassy areas, using appropriate repellants and checking skin for ticks when coming indoors from areas where ticks are likely to reside. It takes about 24-48 hours of attachment for a tick to transmit the bacterial infection, so checking daily can be very effective at preventing disease.

Rabies and West Nile virus are both viral infections. Rabies is contracted through a bite or scratch from an infected animal. It can also be transmitted if saliva from an infected animal gets into an open wound or into a person’s eyes, nose, or mouth. In Michigan, rabies has been reported most often in bats. Once a person develops symptoms of rabies, it is almost universally fatal, so reducing your exposure is crucial. Make sure your cat or dog is kept up to date with its rabies vaccination and avoid contact with unfamiliar/stray and wild animals. If you believe you may have been exposed, contact your healthcare provider or the health department. Don’t wait to seek treatment as there is highly effective preventative treatment available.

(Cont. on pg. 2)
National HIV Testing Day

National HIV Testing Day is June 27 and the Dickinson-Iron District Health Department urges you to **take the test, take control**. You may be at risk for HIV. The only way to know for sure is to get tested.

For many, the thought of taking an HIV test can be scary or intimidating. Some fear that an HIV-positive result may be too much for them to handle. Others are concerned that the process will be uncomfortable, embarrassing or even painful. The truth is, whatever the outcome, learning your HIV status is a path to empowerment. **Here are 3 reasons to get tested today:**

**Your health matters.** Knowing your HIV status is key to protecting your health and health of your partners. If you are HIV-negative, getting tested allows you the opportunity to take stock and then take steps to stay HIV-negative through safer sex and other preventive practices. If you are HIV-positive, early diagnosis gives you the best chance at a long and healthy life.

**HIV is treatable.** Though HIV is still a serious-and infectious-disease, it can be managed with medication. Many people living with HIV lead healthy and productive lives.

**It’s your responsibility.** One quarter of people living with HIV in the U.S. don’t know it. This group is the source of most new HIV infections. Without knowing your status, you could be putting your health and the health of your partners at risk – without knowing it. If you are sexually active, it is your responsibility to get tested.

The Dickinson-Iron District Health Department offers free HIV testing. Please call (906) 779-7237 or (906) 265-4166 to schedule an anonymous appointment. All HIV testing is anonymous and confidential. Orasure testing, a non-invasive, oral test that does not involve a blood draw is also available.

For more information, please call the Health Department at the numbers listed above, the local AIDS Hotline at (906) 282-8014, or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s website at [www.hivtest.org](http://www.hivtest.org).

---

Protecting Yourself against Harmful Bites and Bacteria

*(Cont. from front pg.) . . .* West Nile virus is spread to humans primarily by the bite of an infected mosquito. A mosquito becomes infected by biting a bird that carries the virus. Most people who are infected with West Nile virus either have no symptoms or experience mild illness such as fever, headache and body aches. Again, avoidance is important. Strategies to avoid exposure include wearing long, protective clothing, using appropriate repellants, getting rid of standing water in your yard when feasible and staying indoors when mosquitoes are very active. If you have symptoms of concern, contact your healthcare provider.

Not only should you be aware of potential illness from animal and tick bites during the summer months, but also illness from consuming contaminated food and beverages.

Here are some precautions you can take to protect yourself and your family from foodborne illness:

- When carrying food to another location, keep it cold to minimize bacterial growth. Cold food should be held at or below 40°F. Pack food right from the refrigerator into the cooler immediately before leaving home.
- When using a cooler, keep it out of the direct sun by placing it in the shade or shelter. Avoid opening the lid too often, which lets cold air out and warm air in.
- Be sure there are plenty of clean utensils and platters. To prevent foodborne illness, don’t use the same platter and utensils for raw and cooked meat and poultry. Harmful bacteria present in raw meat and poultry and their juices can contaminate safely cooked food.

The Dickinson-Iron District Health Department is committed to preventing disease and providing health care. For more information about Lyme disease, rabies, West Nile virus and foodborne illness prevention please call the Health Department at 779-7239 or 265-4172.
August is Back to School Month

Shuffling your child back to school these days takes more than a new wardrobe and a shiny apple. What about the dizzying array of immunizations? Hearing and vision tests? Special instructions for the school nurse? And tips for buying and loading a backpack that will help protect your child’s back (Webmd.com).

For a child, going back to school is often a mix of emotions. Along with the excitement about getting a new teacher, seeing their friends, and participating in sports, many children are worried about not making friends, homework, and missing the fun of summer. Parents and teachers worry about keeping children healthy, safe and free from infection while in school.

Public Health is always working to protect families and communities. The Dickinson-Iron District Health Department wants to help families and teachers take the right steps to ensuring a “happy and healthy” child. It is important to protect children from common childhood illness. The healthier a child is, the more prepared they will be to learn.

Making sure a child is up-to-date on all vaccinations, hearing and vision checks and is properly nourished, can give the child a healthy start to the school year. The following are health and safety tips for back to school from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) that can help in preparing your child for that first day:

• Remind your child that he/she is not the only student who is a bit uneasy the first day of school.

• Point out the positive aspects of starting school: It will be fun. He’ll/She’ll see old friends and meet new ones.

• Find another child in the neighborhood with whom your youngster can walk to school or ride with on the bus.

• If you feel it is appropriate, drive your child (or walk with him/her) to school and pick up on the first day.

Giving our children a healthy start to the school year is one of the best things we can do in preparing them for “Back to School.” Parents need to keep their child’s immunizations up-to-date to safe guard against the diseases of the past, get their vision and hearing checked on a regular basis, and promote a healthy diet and encourage activity throughout the week. Families along with schools and communities can work together to make the start of school not only exciting and fun, but ensure that each and every student is sent “Back to School” healthy and ready to learn. The Dickinson-Iron District Health Department is always working to promote healthy lifestyles, because we all pay the price when Michigan is unhealthy.
WIC (Women, Infants and Children) is a food and nutrition program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture through the Michigan Department of Community Health. The Dickinson-Iron District Health Department delivers WIC services and benefits to Dickinson and Iron County residents. WIC provides supplemental food, offers professional nutrition education and makes referrals to community resources based on health screening and assessments of need.

Nutritious foods are provided to supplement and help improve the diet. For example:

- Women and children may receive milk, cheese, eggs, juices rich in Vitamin C, cereals rich in iron, and dry peas/beans or peanut butter, fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads or tortillas.
- Breastfeeding women, who do not receive formula from WIC, may also receive tuna fish, as well as extra cheese, juice & beans.
- Starting at 6 months of age, infants are eligible to receive infant cereal and baby foods in jars. Breastfed infants receive double the amount of baby food.
- For infants who are partially breastfed or not breastfed, WIC provides iron-fortified formula.
- Fresh produce is provided to many WIC participants through Project FRESH, a Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program.

WIC participants are issued a Michigan Bridge Card which can be used at any of the WIC authorized retail stores throughout Michigan. The Bridge Card looks like and is used like a debit or credit card.

Please also note: WIC Project Fresh Coupons can be used at Farmer’s Markets, where WIC Bridge/EBT cards, however, cannot be.