

Dickinson-Iron District Health Department

THE PUBLIC HEALTH PRESS



Health Health Disease
 ~Protection * Education * Prevention~

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Our Mission

“To assure the highest possible level of health for the people of the communities we serve.”

December is Healthy Habits Month

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.



Inside this issue:

Preventing Birth Defects: Important Information You Should Know

- 2 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:

January is Radon Action Month

- 3
- 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.

February is American Heart Month

- 3
- 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.

February is International Prenatal Infection Prevention Month

- 4 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 you healthy before, during and after pregnancy.”

Preventing Birth Defects: Important Information You Should Know

Source: CDC and the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN)

What are Birth Defects?

Birth defects are abnormal conditions that happen before or at the time of birth. Some are mild—like an extra finger or toe. Some are very serious—like a heart defect. They can cause physical, mental, or medical problems. Some, like Down syndrome or sickle cell anemia, are caused by genetic factors. Others are caused by certain drugs, medicines or chemicals. But the causes of most birth defects are still a mystery. Researchers are working hard to learn the causes of birth defects so that we can find ways to prevent them.

Did You Know?

- * Birth defects are the leading cause of death in children less than one year of age - causing one in every five deaths.
- * 18 babies die each day in the U.S. as a result of a birth defect. Defects of the heart and limbs are the most common kinds of birth defects.
- * Millions of dollars are spent every year for the care and treatment of children with birth defects. Birth defects are a serious problem.

How Serious are Birth Defects?

One in 33 babies is born with a birth defect. Many people believe that birth defects only happen to other people. Birth defects can and do happen in any family. About 120,000 babies in the U.S. each year have birth defects.

What is the Good News?

The good news is that new ways of preventing and treating birth defects are being found. Genes that may cause birth defects are being found every day, providing hope for new treatments and cures. Genetic counseling provides parents with information about their risks based on family history, age, ethnic or racial background, or other factors. Better health care for mothers with problems like diabetes or seizures can improve their chances of having healthy babies. Immunization prevents infections like German measles (rubella) that can harm unborn babies.

Today babies born with birth defects can live longer and healthier lives. Special care after birth and newborn screening tests can help these babies.

Many states keep track of how often and where birth defects happen. Your state may be able to tell you about birth defects and services that may help you or someone you know.

What Steps Can Women Take to Prevent Birth Defects?

Not all birth defects can be prevented. But a woman can increase her own chance of having a healthy baby. Many birth defects happen very early in pregnancy, sometimes before a woman even knows she is pregnant. Remember that about half of all pregnancies are unplanned. Here are some steps a woman can take to get ready for a healthy pregnancy:

- Take a vitamin with 400 micrograms (mcg) folic acid every day.
- Avoid alcohol, tobacco and street drugs
- Keep hands clean by washing them often with soap and water to prevent infections
- See a health care professional regularly
- Talk with the health care professional about any medical problems and medicine use (both prescription and over-the-counter)
- Ask about avoiding any substance at work or at home that might be harmful to a developing baby
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet
- Avoid unpasteurized (raw) milk and foods made from it
- Avoid eating raw or undercooked meat

While pregnant:

- Keep up these healthy habits
- Get early prenatal care and go to every appointment

Want to Know More?

Ask your health care professional or **call the Health Department at 774-1868 or 265-9913 on how to plan for a healthy baby.**

You can also call the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636), or visit <http://www.cdc.gov/birthdefects> or <http://www.cdc.gov/pregnancy>, or visit the March of Dimes website <http://marchofdimes.com>.

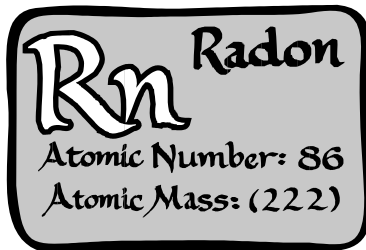
January is National Radon Action Month

Take action in January! The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has designated January as National Radon Action Month.

Three Things You Can Do During National Radon Action Month:

Test your home - EPA and the U.S. Surgeon General recommend that all homes in the U.S. be tested for radon. Testing is easy and inexpensive. Learn more about [testing your home](#), including how to obtain an easy-to-use test kit.

Spread the word - Spend time during National Radon Action Month encouraging others to learn about radon and test their homes. Tell your family and friends about the [health risk](#) of radon. Encourage them to test their homes.



Buy a radon-resistant home - If you are considering buying a new home, look for builders who use [radon-resistant new construction](#). Read more about radon-resistant new construction, "[Building Radon Out: A Step-by-Step Guide to Build Radon-Resistant Homes.](#)"

Contact the Health Department at 779-7239 or 265-9913 for information about radon testing, mitigation, and radon-resistant new construction in your area.

February is American Heart Month

February is American Heart month and that means it's a good moment to think about a disease that kills more than 600,000 Americans each year. Heart disease is the leading killer amongst both men and women.

But there are many things we can do to stay heart healthy. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), making these healthy lifestyle choices can help:

- Choose lean meats and poultry without skin and prepare them without added saturated and trans-fat.
- Select fat-free, 1 percent fat and low-fat dairy products.
- Cut back on foods containing partially hydrogenated vegetable oils to reduce trans-fat in your diet.
- Cut back on foods high in dietary cholesterol. Aim to eat less than 300 mg of cholesterol each day.
- Cut back on beverages and foods with added sugars.
- Select and purchase foods lower in salt/sodium.
- If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation. That means no more than one drink per day if you're a woman and two drinks per day if you're a man.
- Keep an eye on your portion sizes.

It's also important to know the signs of an impending heart attack, because they can start slowly and symptoms may seem mild. According to the [National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute](#), these are the signs that may mean a heart attack is in progress.

- Chest discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- Shortness of breath. May occur with or without chest discomfort.
- Other signs may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness.

For more information, check out the [CDC](#) and the [American Heart Association](#).

(By: Neil Katz, CBS News)



February is International Prenatal Infection Prevention Month

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), group B strep is one of the most common life-threatening infections and is still one of the leading causes of blood infection and meningitis in newborns.

What is group B strep or GBS?

This is a bacterial infection that commonly occurs within the first 24 hours after delivery, to up to one week in babies. This bacterial infection can lead to respiratory distress, pneumonia, shock, apnea, and meningitis in babies.

How common is GBS and what are the symptoms in pregnant women?

GBS is actually very common. Up to 15 to 40 percent of all pregnant women are colonized with GBS. It is a very common inhabitant of the GI and genitourinary tract in women. The major problem is that many women can be colonized with the bacteria but do not have any symptoms. A few do have symptoms, such as urinary tract infection and *chorioamnionitis*, which is an infection of the fluids surrounding the baby.

Is there a test all pregnant women should have to detect group B strep?

The best test is a culture from the regions of the birth canal, and this culture usually is done between 35 and 37 weeks of gestation. If we know this culture is positive, we can help prevent transmission of this bacteria through the birth canal to the baby.

If a woman has GBS and becomes pregnant, how might it affect or infect her baby?

The major problem is that as the baby goes through the birth canal or if the membranes rupture prior to delivery, the bacteria can ascend into the baby's blood stream and cause a very rapid and fulminant infection within often less than 24 hours after delivery.

For more information on how a pregnant woman can protect her baby from GBS, special precautions to be taken if a woman with GBS is pregnant and preventive measures to take to prevent GBS please visit:

www.groupbstrepinternational.orgprenatalinfectionprevention08.html; www.marchofdimes.com or www.cdc.gov.

*** Please call the Health Department at 774-1868 or 265-9913 to learn more about and check eligibility guidelines for our Family Planning, Women, Infant and Children (WIC) and Maternal Infant Health (MIHP) Programs to see if you qualify.**

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