



Dickinson-Iron District Health Department

Dickinson County

818 Pyle Drive, Kingsford, MI 49802
Ph: (906) 774-1868 Fax: (906) 774-9910
BRANCH OFFICE

www.didhd.org

Iron County

601 Washington Avenue, Iron River, MI 49935
Ph: (906) 265-9913 Fax: (906) 265-2950
MAIN OFFICE

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Contact Information:

Kelly Rumpf, 779-7234



Dickinson-Iron District Health Department Kicks off “Healthy Habits” Month

Kingsford and Iron River, Michigan, December 1, 2010 – 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,” said Joyce Ziegler, Community Health Services Director. “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,” said Ziegler.

The Dickinson-Iron District Health Department is committed to promoting wellness, preventing disease, providing health care, and protecting the environment. For additional information contact your local health department or visit www.didhd.org.

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