



# 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](http://www.didhd.org)

## Iron County

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

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### Contact Information:

Kelly Rumpf, 779-7234



## Local Health Departments Across the State Promote Protection Against Harmful Bites and Bacteria in July

Kingsford and Iron River, Michigan, July 3, 2007 – 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. Dickinson-Iron District Health Department (DIDHD) kicked-off a month-long awareness campaign today 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,” said Ron Matonich, Environmental Health Director. “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 female deer tick. If left untreated it can cause chills, fever, headaches, and muscle and joint pain. Although the risk of developing Lyme disease is minimal in Michigan, residents should be aware of their risk of infection and seek immediate diagnosis and treatment upon possible exposure. If you find a tick attached to your skin and would like the tick identified, contact the DIDHD at (906) 265-9913 or (906) 779-7239 for assistance.

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. There is no treatment for rabies once a person or animal shows signs of the disease, so reducing your exposure is crucial.

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. If you suspect that you have been exposed to the virus, seek medical care immediately.

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 should take to protect yourself and your family from foodborne illness:

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- 1) When transporting food from one location to another, keep it cold to minimize bacterial growth. Cold food should be held at or below 40°F. Take food right from the refrigerator and immediately place it into the cooler.
- 2) When using a cooler, always set it in a shady area. Avoid opening the lid too often, as this allows cold air out and warm air in.
- 3) 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 promoting wellness, preventing disease, providing health care, and protecting the environment. For additional information visit our website at [www.didhd.org](http://www.didhd.org).

Additional information about the “**Public Health – For Michigan. For You.**” slogan and “**2007: The Year of Public Health**” can be found at [www.malph.org](http://www.malph.org).

*Dickinson-Iron District Health Department Serving the Community Since 1936 in Health Protection, Health Promotion and Disease Prevention*

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