



PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA

Central Michigan District Health Department
"Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"

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To: Local Media

**From: Environmental Health Services Division, Central Michigan District Health Department
(CMDHD)**

Contact Name: Steve King, Director of Environmental Health

RE: Public Bathing Beach Monitoring Program

Release Date: June 2017

With the summer weather, many of us will soon be enjoying beaches at the many lakes and rivers nearby. For over sixteen years, the Central Michigan District Health Department (CMDHD) has conducted a bathing beach monitoring program of public beaches in the six county district which includes Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon counties. This year we are pleased to be partnering with the Midland County Health Department to assist in monitoring select beaches in Midland County. "Although funding continues to be limited, CMDHD will be able to monitor the most heavily used beaches and the beaches most vulnerable to contamination in our service area. Beaches that are open to the public but not part of our monitoring program; including smaller beaches, campgrounds, and children's camps have been asked by the health department to either implement a water sampling program that meets the State standards or post notices at the beaches to inform the public whether or not the water has been tested for *E. coli* bacteria," stated Steve King, Director of Environmental Health Services with the Central Michigan District Health Department. "If you don't see a posting at a public beach advising whether the beach is monitored and how to find the results of testing, you should contact the beach manager or local municipality responsible for the beach to request they post the beach," advises Director King.

Surface waters contaminated with elevated levels of *E. coli* bacteria can result in flu-like symptoms including nausea, vomiting, stomachache, diarrhea, headache and fever. Other minor illnesses associated with swimming in contaminated waters include ear, eye, nose and throat infections and skin rashes. In highly polluted waters, swimmers run the risk of exposure to more serious disease causing organisms such as *Cryptosporidium*, *Giardia*, *E. coli* O157, *Norovirus*, and *Shigella*. "By monitoring our public swimming areas throughout the summer season, we can promote public safety by warning of high levels of harmful bacteria," said Director King.

When it comes to making a personal decision as to which beaches to spend your summer days on, keep in mind the following tips:

- Large amounts of waterfowl present (geese, ducks) could mean an increased amount of “bird droppings” which may contain high concentrations of *E. coli* bacteria. There may also be a higher risk of swimmers itch.
- Do not swim in public beaches if you have open sores or lesions on your body.
- Research the number of closings the beach has had in the most recent years (check our website at www.cmdhd.org, Public Beach Monitoring for this information)
- If there has been a heavy rain event within the past 48 hours, use caution in swimming due to possible runoff and higher levels of bacteria in the water
- If the water is discolored with a greenish, blue, or milky appearance, this may indicate an algae bloom. Certain algae blooms can produce toxins that could make someone ill.
- Public beaches that are used by a large number of people, especially small children, could contain body fluids and fecal matter.
- Don't swim where the beach has an overabundance of trash and litter.
- Dry off **immediately** with a clean towel after getting out of the water. Don't forget to use sunscreen and take precautions against sunburn. It's also a good idea to take a shower after spending a day at the beach.
- Wash your hands with soap and water before eating.

For more information on the beach monitoring program and results, log onto our website at www.cmdhd.org and click on the Public Beach Monitoring information link. This program is made available through funds from the Department of Environmental Quality, the Clean Michigan Initiative, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and from the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding available this year will allow continued monitoring of the beaches along the Lake Huron/Saginaw Bay in Arenac County. While proposed to be eliminated, it is hoped Great Lakes funding will be restored so that the beaches along Lake Huron can continue to be monitored in coming years.

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon. Visit our website at www.cmdhd.org, LIKE Central Michigan District Health Department on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @CMiDHD.

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