Central Michigan District Health Department

Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities

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To: Local Media

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

Contact Name: Steve King, Director of Environmental Health

RE: Public Bathing Beach Monitoring Program

Release Date: Immediately (May 30, 2019)

The Central Michigan District Health Department (CMDHD) will be conducting a bathing beach monitoring program of public beaches in the six county district, which includes Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon counties. This swimming season will be the 18th consecutive year CMDHD will be monitoring select public beaches. It is also the third year in partnership with the Midland County Health Department to assist in monitoring select Midland County beaches. Monitoring consists of weekly water sampling and testing for E. coli, posting results on the State's BeachGuard website, and posting advisories at beaches with elevated E. coli results. Testing beaches during the swimming season is important to make sure the public is informed of high E. coli levels that pose a greater risk of illness. "Beaches posted with an advisory should not be used for swimming until further testing show bacteria levels are within acceptable limits," stated Steve King, Director of Environmental Health for the Central Michigan District Health Department.

Surface waters contaminated with elevated levels of E. coli bacteria can result in illness symptoms including nausea, vomiting, stomachache, diarrhea, headache and fever. Other illnesses associated with swimming in contaminated waters include ear, eye, nose and throat infections, and skin rashes and skin infections. 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.

"Beaches that are open to the public but not part of a 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 Director King. Public beaches that are not being monitored for E. coli are required to post a sign stating they are not being monitored.

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" that 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 or Michigan's BeachGuard website.
- If there has been a heavy rain event within the past 48 hours, use caution in swimming due to possible runoff and likely higher levels of bacteria in the water. Avoid waters that are unusually cloudy or muddy after heavy rain.
- 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.
- Don't swim where the beach has an abundance 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 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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