Central Michigan
District Health Department
Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities

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PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA

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: Immediately (June 25, 2020)

The Central Michigan District Health Department (CMDHD) is 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 19th consecutive year CMDHD will be monitoring selected public beaches. It is also the fourth 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 STEC, 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 which are not being monitored for E. coli are required to post a sign stating they are not being monitored.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added another concern while at the beach this summer. Protect yourself and family by practicing physical distancing; keeping at least 6 feet away from people not in your household. Face masks should not be worn while swimming because they are difficult to breathe through when wet. Summer days spent at Michigan public beaches is a fun activity that can be done safely by following a few simple rules:

- If there has been a heavy rain event within the past 48 hours, avoid swimming due to possible runoff and likely higher levels of bacteria in the water. Avoid waters that are unusually cloudy or muddy after rain.
- 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 swimmer's 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 the water is discolored with a greenish, blue, or milky appearance, this may indicate an algal bloom. Certain algal blooms can produce toxins that could make someone ill.
- Do not swim where the beach has an abundance of trash and litter.
- Dry off immediately with a clean towel after getting out of the water. Do not forget to use sunscreen and take precautions against sunburn. It is 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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