

# Connecting Point *Newsletter*

Mid-Michigan District  
**HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
CLINTON • GRATIOT • MONTCALM

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Visit [www.mmdhd.org](http://www.mmdhd.org)  
for more information on  
agency programs,  
services and health  
issues.

## ***Prescription for Health***

*Prescription for Health* is a successful nutrition initiative that began in 2018 through the efforts of the *Live Well Gratiot* collaborative. This year, with second year funding from the Gratiot County Community Foundation and new funding from the Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation, Prescription for Health is expanding the number of participants from 30 in last year's program, to 70 in Gratiot County and 30 in Isabella County this year.



Prescription for Health is primarily a nutrition program, in which patients with diet-related health conditions are identified by their health care providers and are given a referral. Participants attend an orientation and a series of six "Eat Healthy, Be Active" classes taught by MSU Extension. At each session, participants are given coupons that allow them to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at the St. Louis Farmers Market or the Mt. Pleasant Farmers Market. The total value of the coupons over the course of the program and season is \$120 per person.

Beyond receiving food coupons, the benefits of the program are many. Participants benefit from exercise as they visit the market and socialization as they interact with their instructor, fellow participants and produce vendors. Transportation vouchers are available for those who live within the county transportation system service areas. A new feature this year is the opportunity for Gratiot County enrollees to participate in an exercise program run by the Alma College Department of Exercise Physiology. Participants in both counties agree to share pre-and-post lab work results, allowing Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) staff to evaluate the health benefits of the program, including potential weight loss, lower cholesterol and/or blood sugar levels.

For more information on the Prescription for Health Program, contact Rex Hoyt, Data Analyst, at (989) 831-3627 or [rhoyt@mmdhd.org](mailto:rhoyt@mmdhd.org); or Cheryl Thelen, Health Educator, at (989) 831-3634.

## ***Plan for Back to School Immunizations Now!***

Now is the perfect time to schedule back-to-school immunizations. With school beginning in late August, it is especially important to make sure school aged children are up to date on their immunizations before classes start. Health care providers are reminded to assess the immunization status of school-age patients at every visit, and provide immunizations when they are due. Parents are reminded of the importance of protecting their kids from exposure to diseases that are easily spread in small spaces like a classroom. With the current measles outbreak, it is important for adults to be up to date as well.

Immunization appointments are available through the MMDHD by calling any one of our local branch offices. August appointment times fill up quickly, so making those appointments now will help to prevent long wait times and ease the transition into the new school year.

SCHOOL IMMUNIZATIONS



## Bat Season



Warm weather creates opportunities for people to encounter bats and other wildlife. Unfortunately, this can result in a potentially harmful bite. Rabies is a viral disease in mammals which is transmitted through a bite or scratch of an infected animal. It is fatal to humans when left untreated.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services reports that in 2018, 77 bats tested positive for rabies throughout the state. Within the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) region, 75 bats were tested for rabies, and fortunately, only 1 tested positive last year.

If a bite does occur, or if a bat is found near a sleeping person, an unattended child or an impaired person; it should be captured and tested. To test for rabies, the bat's head must be left intact, so capture requires thoughtful procedures. A video of safe bat capture can be found in the Communicable Disease section of the health department's website at [www.mmdhd.org](http://www.mmdhd.org).

Once captured, residents should contact the MMDHD prior to bringing the bat in for testing. A communicable disease nurse is available to assist and provide additional information on testing and post-exposure treatment. Nurses can be reached in Clinton County at (989) 227-3111, Gratiot County at (989) 875-1019, and Montcalm County at (989) 831-3615.

For information on reporting bites, visit [www.mmdhd.org](http://www.mmdhd.org). Additional information, including statewide mapping of positive rabies cases, can be found at [www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases](http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases).

## Project Fresh



Project Fresh is a farmers market nutrition program administered by WIC (Women, Infants and Children) each summer. Eligible WIC families are provided with a \$25 coupon booklet, allowing them to purchase fresh, local fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets.

MMDHD staff provide WIC participants with education on the health benefits of eating fresh fruits and vegetables, information on seasonal availability of produce, and ways in which to enjoy fresh produce more. Project Fresh coupons are usable until October 31st, allowing families to purchase produce that is most appealing to them.

For more information on Project Fresh and eligibility, contact WIC at your local MMDHD county office.

## Avoiding Tick-Borne Illnesses



The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) wants to remind residents to protect themselves from tick bites now that spring is here. Tick-borne illnesses, primarily Lyme Disease caused by the black-legged tick, are a concern in Michigan. In 2017, 291 cases of Lyme Disease were reported statewide. Clinton County is considered an area of "known risk," as at least two cases were confirmed. Gratiot and Montcalm Counties are considered areas of "potential risk," as black-legged ticks have a presence there.

The most obvious sign of Lyme Disease is a bulls-eye rash (erythema migrans). Other symptoms include: fever, chills, headache, muscle and joint pain, and fatigue. Severe cases may result in heart problems, nervous system issues or arthritis.

For protection from tick bites, residents are encouraged to follow these tips:

- Avoid tick-infested areas, including overgrown grass, brush and leaf litter.
- Use insect repellent containing DEET.
- Perform daily tick checks after being outdoors and be familiar with tick removal techniques.
- Bathe or shower after outdoor activity and wash clothing in hot water.

As there are five common tick varieties in Michigan, residents are now able to receive help in identifying ticks they encounter. Through the *MDHHS Citizen Submitted Tick Program*, residents can email photos to the State for assistance in identification. For more information on this program and tick-borne diseases, visit: [www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases](http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases)



For more information about these and other Health Department programs, contact:

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