

# 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.

## ***Maternal Smoking***

Smoking rates for pregnant women have declined in recent years, yet the rate continues to be a concern in the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) area. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services reports that the statewide smoking rate for pregnant women in 2017 was 14.3%, 21.9% in Montcalm County, 20.1% in Gratiot County and 9.6% in Clinton County.



Smoking during pregnancy increases the risks of complications during pregnancy and after birth. Babies born to women who smoke while pregnant are at risk for low birth weight, premature birth, stillbirth, sudden infant death syndrome, cleft lip and palate, and respiratory problems. It is never too late to quit smoking during pregnancy, as it will reduce harm to both mom and baby.

There are many resources available to assist pregnant women in quitting, including:

- The *Michigan Tobacco Quitline*, at 1-800-QUIT-NOW. Women have access to a telephone quit coach who assists during pregnancy and after. Those who participate in the program have the opportunity to earn gift card incentives for completing counseling calls.
- *SCRIPT* (Smoking Cessation and Reduction in Pregnancy Treatment) is a self-guided program that includes the assistance of a local quit coach. It is available through the Gratiot MMDHD office by calling (989) 831-3634, and is also available through Spectrum Health United Lifestyles in Greenville at (616) 754-6185.
- [www.women.smokefree.gov](http://www.women.smokefree.gov) This website provides a variety of options through social media, including Facebook support groups, phone apps and text messaging programs.

Quitting smoking is never easy, but the added incentive of delivering a healthy baby is well worth the effort.

## ***Pathways to Better Health***

The *Pathways to Better Health* program connects individuals to community resources and programs with the goal of improving their health and well-being. Managing chronic health conditions can be overwhelming, and people often do not know where to turn to for help. With the aid of the MMDHD's Community Health Workers (CHW), that help is available.

The Pathways Program is free to those who qualify. To be eligible, one must be 18 years or older; have Medicaid, Medicare, the Healthy Michigan Plan, or be eligible; have two or more chronic health conditions; and live in Clinton, Gratiot, or Montcalm Counties.

All services are provided at no cost in the client's home by a CHW, who has received specialized training. The CHW's help their clients with assistance in: finding family doctors, finding counseling services, applying for health insurance, accessing community services, receiving nutrition education, obtaining clothing, food, housing and transportation, and managing health conditions.

For more information on *Pathways to Better Health* or to access an online application for services, visit: [www.mmdhd.org/pathways](http://www.mmdhd.org/pathways).



## Suicide Awareness

Suicide is a growing public health concern. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide rates in the United States have risen nearly 30% since 1999. It is the 10th leading cause of death in Michigan. Mental health concerns, relationship issues, trauma, substance abuse, poor health, and job and financial problems all potentially contribute to suicide risk.

The CDC reports that suicide is a problem throughout the lifespan. It is the second leading cause of death for people ages 10-34, the fourth leading cause among people ages 35-64, and the eighth leading cause among people ages 55-64. Veterans and sexual minority youth are considered high risk.

As a public health issue, it is important to work with schools, community mental health and social service agencies, substance abuse coalitions, health care, and faith-based organizations to build community, relationships, and awareness. The Community Health Improvement Plans for each of MMDHD's counties now includes goals around suicide prevention, building resiliency, becoming trauma informed, and reducing the stigma of mental illness. Mental health first training is encouraged and is available through local community mental health agencies.

Resources for suicide prevention can be found at:

- [www.gratiotdrugfree.org/suicide-prevention.html](http://www.gratiotdrugfree.org/suicide-prevention.html)
- [www.mymasp.org](http://www.mymasp.org)
- [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
- [www.speakingofsuicide.com](http://www.speakingofsuicide.com)

Local and national crisis lines include:

- CMH Authority of Clinton, Eaton and Ingham Counties (517) 346-8460
- Gratiot Integrated Health Network (989) 463-4971
- Montcalm Care Network (989) 831-7520
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)



## Winter Car Preparedness

Winter weather in Michigan is unpredictable. For that reason, it is important to be prepared for changing weather and road conditions. Items to keep in the car in case of emergency include: water, food, blankets, kitty litter, de-icer, ice scraper, flashlight, boots, gloves, and booster cables. Winterizing one's car can reduce the stress of driving in hazardous weather by: upgrading tires, replacing wiper blades, checking antifreeze levels, and keeping the gas tank full. Having a tow truck phone number on hand is helpful, along with letting someone know about travel plans.

For more information on winter weather preparedness, visit: [www.cdc.gov/features/winterweather/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/features/winterweather/index.html) or [www.michigan.gov/miready](http://www.michigan.gov/miready)



## Infection Prevention

With colder weather, people stay inside where it is warm and toasty, making it easier to spread viruses and bacteria that cause illness. Whether it's the flu, strep throat, norovirus or the common cold, these illnesses can spread quickly and effortlessly.



The spread of infection happens through direct contact with an infected person or surface, and through coughing, sneezing or touching. This makes prevention habits important to follow routinely, and include:

- Washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before eating, after coughing or sneezing, after blowing one's nose or using the bathroom. Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Covering a cough or sneeze with a tissue or inside the elbow.
- Cleaning surfaces with anti-bacterial wipes.
- Getting vaccinated for protection from the flu.
- Staying home when ill, especially when active symptoms, including a fever, are present.
- Not sharing personal items, including drinking glasses or eating utensils.

## Flu Focus

Flu activity continues to be widespread across the country. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services reports that both Influenza A and B are on the increase in the central region of Michigan. Encouraging patient and community members to get the flu vaccine is still important! For more information, visit:

[www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly) or [www.michigan.gov/flu](http://www.michigan.gov/flu)



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

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