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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 10, 2015

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Michigan residents urged to avoid excessive alcohol use to promote safe, healthy summer

LANSING, Mich. – Excessive alcohol use is the third leading preventable cause of death in the United States. In Michigan, it costs the state \$8.2 billion and is responsible for 84,215 years of potential life lost each year. To help promote a safe and healthy summer throughout the state, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is reminding all residents to avoid excessive alcohol consumption.

“Excessive alcohol use is associated with numerous health problems, including motor vehicle crashes, assaults, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, alcohol dependence, cirrhosis, and cancer,” said Dr. Eden Wells, chief medical executive of the MDHHS. “It’s important that all residents understand the health consequences of excessive alcohol consumption.”

Findings related to excessive alcohol use among adults in Michigan were recently released by the American Journal of Public Health article, “Drinking Patterns in US Counties from 2002 to 2012” and the associated interactive health map. This new research from the Institute for Health Metrics and Education provides county-level estimates of excessive drinking, which MDHHS can use as part of its surveillance efforts and to help plan for interventions to reduce excessive alcohol use in Michigan communities.

The research from the Institute for Health Metrics and Education shows that women are increasingly at risk for complications and dangers associated with alcohol consumption. Additionally, women are especially vulnerable to the effects of alcohol because of their bodies’ size and how they process alcohol. Women also have more health risks from excessive alcohol use, including sexual assault, breast cancer, and harming a baby if drinking while pregnant.

In Michigan, as well as across the country, women’s excessive drinking behaviors are increasing at a higher rate than men’s. While 2012 prevalence of binge drinking was almost twice as high in men (27.5 percent) compared to women (14.8 percent), the increase in binge drinking from 2005 to 2012 was 21.3 percent for women, compared to 3.8 percent for men. Heavy drinking among women in the same time period rose 31.6 percent, compared to 3.9 percent for men.

The results of this study show that where you live can impact your health. Alcohol use is affected by the price and availability of alcohol in a community. Such factors may be key starting points in efforts to reduce excessive alcohol consumption on a local level.

To access the American Journal of Public Health article, visit <http://ajph.aphapublications.org>. Additionally, the interactive US Health Map is available at <http://vizhub.healthdata.org/us-health-map/>. For more information about excessive alcohol use surveillance and prevention in Michigan, visit www.michigan.gov/substanceabuseepi.

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