



ITASCA COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
ITASCA RESOURCE CENTER
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COVID SPREAD STILL CAN BE REVERSED

(Grand Rapids, Minn., **Nov. 23, 2020**) – As Itasca County residents prepare for the Thanksgiving holiday, it will be without two more local residents. A male in his 60s and another in his 70s have passed away due to COVID-19.

“We extend our sympathies to the families and friends of those lost and all who are mourning during this pandemic,” said Kelly Chandler, Itasca County Public Health division manager. “So much of the focus these days is on numbers. However, it is the people – our families, our spouses, our friends and coworkers—for whom we are fighting.”

Of the county’s total 24 COVID-related deaths, 16 resided in facilities and eight in private residences. Those who have passed range from being in their 50s to their 90s.

In the past seven days, 239 Itasca residents tested positive for COVID-19 and 574 in the past 14 days. Currently hospitalized are 29 Itasca residents, with five in intensive care units. The 14-day case rate per 10,000 residents as of Nov. 20 is 129.9, up again from 123.3 as of Nov. 16.

“Thanksgiving is the perfect time to remember those struggling right now with COVID-related health conditions and stress,” said Chandler. “We have a record number hospitalized and in ICUs, wondering if they will get back to their loved ones. Parents and guardians doing what they can to support their students. Early childhood care providers stretching to keep everybody safe so that parents can go to work. Youth temporarily sacrificing their activities and sports. Too many who are wondering from where their next check or their next meal might come. And, of course, those on the front lines of health care who have been staring COVID in the face for nine months.

“Still, there is good. Food is available through Second Harvest, students are able to access learning in ways never before available, mask-wearing is happening, most residents have found ways to navigate restrictions, crisis funds are available through the United Way, partners have rallied to provide business with record levels of support.

“We can do this.”

As Itasca County continues to battle uncontrolled spread, prevention and testing remain powerful tools. Prevention includes wearing your mask and appreciating those who wear masks



for you. Keeping six feet of physical distance with those outside your immediate household. Avoiding gatherings, especially difficult during the Thanksgiving holiday, incredibly important as deaths, hospitalizations and COVID spread keep rising in Itasca County.

If you are waiting for COVID test results, stay home. If you experience even mild symptoms that resemble a cold or allergies, stay home and seek testing. If you have a positive test, your household members also need to quarantine for 14 days from last exposure.

In addition to COVID testing available through local health care facilities, Itasca area residents now have access to two additional sources.

The National Guard Armory in Hibbing at 2310 Brooklyn Drive now offers nasal swabs that are 100 percent free to the patient, whether or not you have health insurance. Hours are 12-6 p.m., although the facility is not open every day. To minimize your wait and ensure that it is a testing day, schedule an appointment here: <https://www.primarybio.com/r/hibbing>

Free home saliva testing kits also are available to any person in Minnesota, delivered to your home with expedited shipping (go to <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/athome.html>). UPS sites for returning completed tests include:

- UPS Grand Rapids, 425 11TH ST SE, GRAND RAPIDS, MN 55744
- 108 MAIN AVE E, DEER RIVER, MN 56636 (Inside Jurvelin Hardware)
- 431 E PLATT AVE, NASHWAUK, MN 55769 (Inside Ross Home Center)
- 100 OTTUM AVE, BIGFORK, MN 56628 (Inside Bigfork Hardware)
- Link to other sites - <https://locations.ups.com/mn/>

Itasca residents with questions or concerns may leave them at the Itasca County COVID message line, with calls returned 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday – Friday. The Itasca COVID line number is 218-327-6784. Current local data and information also can be found at the county's website here: <https://www.co.itasca.mn.us/798/COVID-19-Coronavirus-Information>

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Note to media: Itasca County Health Department will host 30-minute press briefings on Thursdays at 10:00 a.m. as needed. The next scheduled briefing will be Dec. 3. There will be no additional November briefing, unless need dictates. Contact anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us for more information.

Itasca County Public Health media contacts

Kelly Chandler (218-327-6144 and kelly.chandler@co.itasca.mn.us) or Anna Anttila (anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us).