



ITASCA COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
ITASCA RESOURCE CENTER
1209 SE 2nd Avenue, Grand Rapids, Minnesota 55744-3983
Hearing Impaired Number TDD: 218-327-5549
(218) 327-2941

Visit us at: www.co.itasca.mn.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ITASCA COVID CASES FALL AS VACCINATIONS CLIMB

(Grand Rapids, Minn., **May 20, 2021**) – After weeks as Minnesota’s top COVID-spreading county, Itasca is seeing significant improvements as vaccination rates rise.

Four variants of the virus causing COVID-19 have been identified in Itasca County since January, contributing to an explosion of cases between February and May. Last week, the 14-day rate of infection for every 10,000 Itasca residents was 73.8. This week, the rate is 55.4 percent. Between May 12 and 18, 102 new cases were identified in the community compared to 151 the previous week.

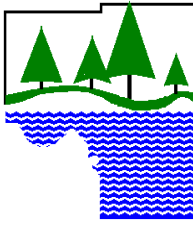
Itasca County saw another death due to COVID this week, a woman in her 90s.

“For those who have been vaccinated, the news in our country, state and county is very good,” said Kelly Chandler, Itasca County Public Health division manager. “The vaccines work and community-wide immunity is on the horizon. But for those who are not yet vaccinated, the risks right now are still very real. Itasca County is not at a place of community (herd) immunity—far from it. With 53 percent of those 16 and older vaccinated, we have a long way to go to reach at least 70 percent. Combine that with the presence of variants in the county and an influx of seasonal visitors and we, unfortunately, cannot let our guards down.”

With emergency use authorization of Pfizer vaccines announced for those ages 12 to 15, local clinics and pharmacies are increasing available supplies and opportunities for teens. In addition to ongoing availability through area clinics and pharmacies, two special Pfizer clinics will be offered next week for high school students in Deer River and Grand Rapids:

May 25, 9:00 a.m. – noon at Deer River High School (gymnasium,) for students 12 and older as well as family members. Fact sheets and parent authorization forms are available at www.isd317.net/covid-vaccine-info. Students should bring completed forms to the Nurse's Office, Room 227, or adults may call (218)246-2420 ext. 60223 to schedule an appointment. Provided by Essentia Health Deer River. Walk-ins without previous registration also will be welcome.

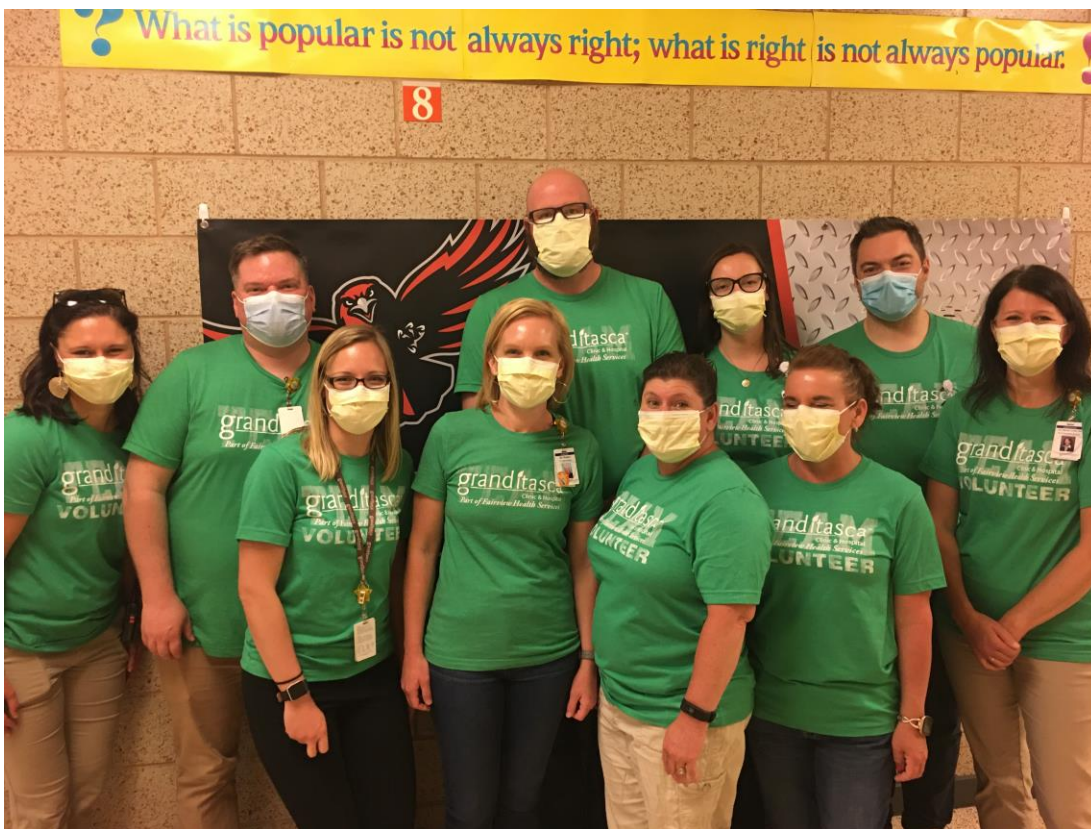
May 25, 3:30 – 5:30 at Grand Rapids High School (parking lot), for those 12 and older. Sponsored by Grand Rapids High School Band and Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital. Limited appointments are available and can be requested online at <https://bit.ly/3u2BPDc>.



All three COVID vaccines are available throughout Itasca County. Itasca County Public Health's upcoming clinics include: May 22 (Moderna) at IRA Civic Center (10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.) and Sunday and May 23 (Johnson & Johnson) at Bethany Lutheran Church in Deer River (10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.). Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital has teamed up to offer the Johnson & Johnson vaccine at upcoming Second Harvest pop-up food pantries. Details on these and other upcoming vaccination events may be found at the county's website: www.co.itasca.mn.us.

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. Information about vaccination options and current local data and information may be found at the county's website here: <https://www.co.itasca.mn.us/798/COVID-19-Coronavirus-Information>

-END-



Caption: Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital staff hosted a vaccination clinic for Robert J. Elington Middle School this week, providing first doses of the Pfizer vaccine requested by 121 students.

Itasca County Public Health media contacts

Kelly Chandler (218-327-6144 and Kelly.chandler@co.itasca.mn.us)