



ITASCA COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
ITASCA RESOURCE CENTER
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Visit us at: www.co.itasca.mn.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ITASCA COUNTY TO BE SITE OF SEPT. 23 DRIVE-THROUGH COVID TESTING

(Grand Rapids, Minn., **September 17, 2020**) – Itasca area residents continue to fight the spread of COVID-19 in area communities. Over the past week (since Sept. 10), 37 additional cases of COVID-19 have been identified among Itasca residents. Since last reported three days ago (on Sept. 14), 14 additional cases have been confirmed.

Key to understanding recent spread, Itasca County has calculated the most current 14-day infection rate of positive cases per 10,000 residents as 9.9. This custom analysis is provided by Itasca County Public Health as one of several factors considered by local schools as they work to deliver services safely.

“For those watching numbers closely, we acknowledge that the data can be confusing,” said Kelly Chandler, Itasca County Public Health department manager. “In the case of 14-day trends, we are reporting based on the day the test was taken (also known as specimen collection). This is different than when we report case numbers, which we report by the day we receive notice of positive confirmation.

“What’s most important to know is that Itasca County could go either way right now – every effort to contain the coronavirus matters so that we can keep our businesses open, our schools with options, and our friends and families safe.”

In an effort to interrupt community spread of COVID-19, Itasca County agencies have teamed up with the Minnesota National Guard, State of Minnesota, Mayo Clinic and University of Minnesota to conduct a one-day testing event in Grand Rapids on Sept. 23, 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. at the Itasca County Fairgrounds. It will be a drive-through process, entering the fairgrounds at the northwest gate (next to the animal barns).

Registration is not required, but will speed up your experience at the testing site. Go to <https://www+.primarybio.com/r/itasca> to register for an appointment time. If you are not able to sign up online, or need a translator, call 1-855-612-0677.

Any person is welcome to be tested, including those who are asymptomatic (without symptoms) but have reason to think they should be tested. There is no cost and no IDs or insurance are required. Testing will be done with a nasal swab and processed either by Mayo Clinic Laboratories or the University of Minnesota, with results back in a few days.



“This broad testing is a unique opportunity for individuals to get useful information, as well as for communities to better understand how the pandemic is playing out here in Itasca County,” said Chandler. “This is a push we need right now.”

“While many who contract COVID-19 may experience mild or even no symptoms, some suffer life-threatening complications. All who contract the virus are contagious. Being able to test more people will help us to understand what’s really happening in Itasca County and inform how we approach prevention going into winter and fall.”

The Itasca event is part of a four-week, statewide testing initiative beginning Sept. 21 in Winona.

“This effort will provide a bridge until mid-October, when Minnesotans will have additional access to testing through the opening of semi-permanent saliva testing locations,” said Dan Huff, Minnesota Department of Health Assistant Commissioner for Health Protection.

“We are grateful to the Minnesota National Guard, especially those from our local communities, who have been activated to support Minnesotans,” said Chandler. “The Guard has been critical in the testing of long-term care facilities here and throughout the state. They know as well as anyone how important our communities’ efforts to combat COVID-19 are.”

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.

Helpful links:

Decision tree for people in schools, youth and child care programs -
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf>

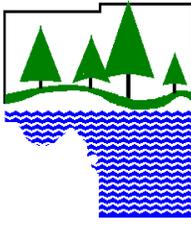
[MN Stay Safe Plan](https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/stay-safe-mn/stay-safe-plan.jsp) - <https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/stay-safe-mn/stay-safe-plan.jsp>

[MN Business and Employer COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Overview and Template](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/businessesplan.html) -
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/businessesplan.html>

[MN Guidelines on when to return to work](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/returntowork.pdf) (after symptoms, exposure or diagnosis of COVID-19)
- <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/returntowork.pdf>

[CDC Guidance for Businesses and Workplaces](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html) (Plan, Prepare, and Respond) -
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>

[Department of Labor Families First Coronavirus Response Act \(FFCRA\) Information](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/ffcra) -
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/ffcra>



[FFCRA Workplace Poster](#) -

https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WHD/posters/FFCRA_Poster_WH1422_Non-Federal.pdf

[Society for Human Resources Management \(SHRM\)](#) (some resources available for non-members) – <http://www.shrm.org>

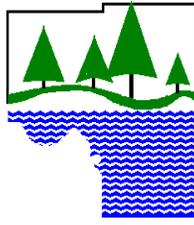
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Note to media: Itasca County Health Department will host 30-minute press briefings on Thursdays at 10:00 a.m. as needed. The next briefing will be Oct. 1. Recordings available. Contact anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us for more information.

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).





STAY SAFE MN
Get Tested for COVID-19



- **Open to everyone**
- **Symptoms or no symptoms**
- **Free, no insurance needed**

Wednesday September 23, 2020
10:00 am - 6:00 pm

Itasca County Fair Grounds
1336 Fairgrounds Rd.
Grand Rapids, MN 55744

Sign up for an appointment time now.

This helps us keep wait times short and give people plenty of space.

Register online:

<https://www.primarybio.com/r/itasca>

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/>

Spanish, interpreters are available.

If you are not able to sign up online, or need a translator, call 1-855-612-0677 for assistance.



Minnesota Department of Health | health.mn.gov | 651-201-5000
Contact health.communications@state.mn.us to request an alternate format.
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