



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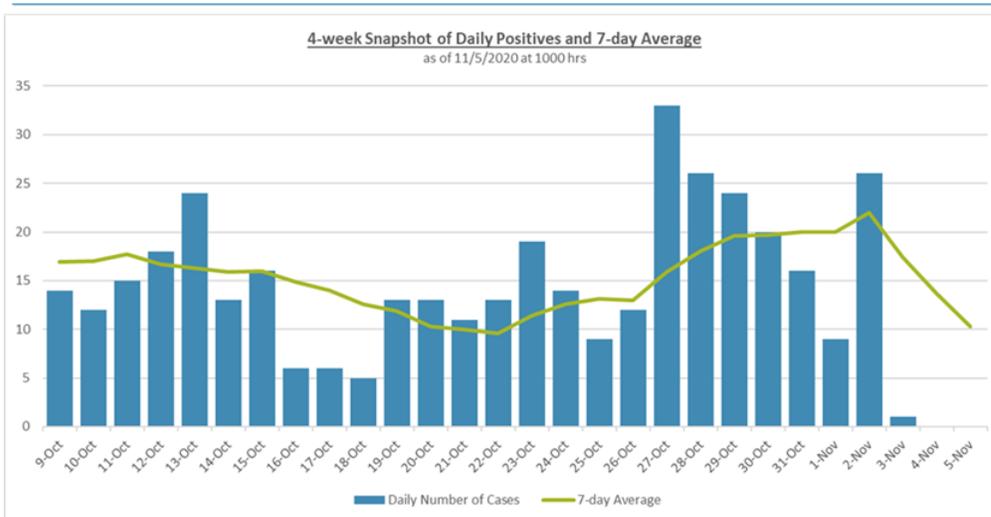
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INDIVIDUAL CHOICES KEY TO KEEPING ITASCANS SAFE FROM COVID, ESPECIALLY NOW

(Grand Rapids, Minn., **Nov. 5, 2020**) – In a sharp turn to the worse, Itasca County now has confirmed spread of COVID-19 within every city and township.

Of Itasca County’s 954 total cases of COVID-19 to date, 144 were identified in the past seven days and 244 identified in the past 14. Nine residents currently are hospitalized and three are in an Intensive Care Unit. No additional deaths have been attributed to COVID-19, which stands at 18 Itascans lost.



Source: Itasca County Public Health, by date of specimen collection

The 14-day rate of positive cases per 10,000 Itasca residents, a key tool for local school decision-making, stands at 54.3 as of Nov. 2.

“At this point, everyone should just assume that if they are in a public setting or a group gathering, someone has COVID-19,” said Kelly Chandler, Itasca County Public Health department manager. “Plan to take precautions, masking, staying at least six feet apart and limiting interactions with groups.”



Because of widespread community spread, Itasca County Public Health is scaling back contact tracing and focusing their efforts on schools, facilities, worksites and sports teams. Upon a diagnosis, the organization will be expected to make sure all those who have been within close contact are identified and notified.

“More than ever, Itasca residents are in this together,” said Chandler. “We still have a long wait for vaccines, so we’ve got to figure this out. Statewide, availability of hospital beds is tightening. And we’re already seeing typical fall and winter illnesses, including mental health issues, compound the effects of COVID.

“It is in Itasca County’s nature to take action and protect each other. This will be especially true in the next months, a time when we typically would be gathering. Know that staying home is an expression of care and love. If you do gather, a few tips to minimize the risk to yourself and others:

- Start a 14-day self-quarantine now if gathering for Thanksgiving. At the very least, severely limit interactions.
- Keep windows open and air circulating, minimizing time indoors
- Prepare for keeping physical interactions distanced, especially indoors
- If you’re travelling, minimize stops by bringing your own supplies
- Hunters, buy licenses online
- Recognize the effects of alcohol on choice-making and exuberant expression

Itasca County has created a local dashboard with current local data, including positive COVID cases by ZIP code. It is at: <https://www.co.itasca.mn.us/798/COVID-19-Coronavirus-Information>. In addition, Independent School District 318 (Bigfork and Grand Rapids) has created a district online COVID [dashboard](http://www.isd318.org) at its website (www.isd318.org).

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.

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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 Nov. 12. Recordings available. Contact anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us for more information.

Itasca County Public Health media contacts

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