



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

DEATHS AND HOSPITALIZATIONS RISE FOLLOWING THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

(Grand Rapids, Minn., **Dec. 10, 2020**) – Four Itasca County residents have died in the past several days due to COVID-19, three women in their 90s and a male in his 50s.

“Our deepest sympathies are with the family and loved ones of those who have passed,” said Kelly Chandler, Itasca County Public Health division director. “So many of our neighbors have suffered and continue to suffer due to this virus. We honor them by protecting each other and staying strong.”

As of 10:00 a.m. on Dec. 10, Itasca County has seen 232 newly identified positive cases of COVID-19 in the past seven days and 514 over the past 14 days. Sixty-six Itasca residents remain hospitalized and 14 of these are in intensive care units.

As of Dec. 7, the most recent data available, Itasca County’s 14-day positive case rate per 10,000 residents is down a bit to 111.

“We are 14 days, or one quarantine period, out from Christmas Eve,” said Chandler. “While gathering with others outside your household is strongly discouraged, those who insist should limit or eliminate exposures between now and then—starting today. Please consider the pain and death we are seeing after the Thanksgiving holiday as a wake-up call for our local communities, where the coronavirus is everywhere. Vaccinations and relief are on the horizon; we can’t give up or relax yet.”

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) have adjusted guidance related to quarantine in recent days. A full 14 days remains the best length of time to keep someone who might have been exposed to the virus away from others, ensuring that they are no longer infectious.

CDC recently told states that they may opt to shorten quarantine times under specific situations. Quarantine can be reduced to 10 days from date of exposure if one wears a mask, keeps physical distance, washes hands and monitors for symptoms. One can further shorten it to seven days if wearing a mask, socially distancing, washing hands, monitoring for symptoms AND receiving a negative PCR test at least five days after exposure.



Shortening quarantine is not recommended if you have had a household contact of COVID-19 (a family member has tested positive), if you live or work in a congregate care facility or are a health care worker.

Centers for Disease Control has a useful fact sheet available at its website (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>).

For those seeking testing, call ahead to Essentia Deer River, Scenic Rivers and Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital for details. Also, state-provided tests are available through the National Guard Armory in Hibbing (<https://www.primarybio.com/r/hibbing>) and an at-home test ordered online (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/athome.html>).

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

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. 17, with updates from area health care providers. 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).