



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

STAY STRONG, SAY PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS AS LOCAL COVID RATES RISE AGAIN

(Grand Rapids, Minn., **Feb. 8, 2021**) – Itasca County is seeing a new rise in COVID-19 cases following several weeks of decline. The seven-day rate of new cases as of Feb. 8 is 55; on Feb. 4 the rate was 35.

When measured by the 14-day average of cases per 10,000 residents, Itasca County's rate has jumped from 15.7 as of Feb. 1 to 18.4 as of Feb. 5.

“With increased openings of businesses, schools and community activity, it’s up to us to stay the course until vaccines are widely available,” said Kelly Chandler, division manager, Itasca County Public Health. “Mask-wearing continues to be necessary, as are avoiding groups and keeping six feet of distance. We don’t want to lose the ground we gained in January and have to go backward.”

Twelve percent, or 5,422, of Itasca County residents have received at least a first dose of COVID-19 vaccines, according to Minnesota Department of Health.

Vaccines currently are available in Itasca County for those ages 65 and older through Scenic Rivers clinic in Bigfork and Essentia Health in Deer River. Bigfork Valley offers a waiting list for those over 65, although they currently do not have vaccine on hand. Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital opens appointments at 9:00 a.m. on Mondays, currently for those 75 and older, with appointments based on vaccine availability.

Itasca County Public Health continues to complete vaccination of priority groups such as childcare providers and schools staff.

Only those ages 65 and older, schools staff, childcare providers and healthcare providers are in the 1a vaccine priority group set by Minnesota Department of Health. Phase 1b still is being determined at the state level and has not yet been announced.

“Supplies reaching our rural communities remain limited,” said Chandler. “It is essential that we keep our families safe, our kids in school and our businesses open by each doing our part. We still have many weeks before enough of us are vaccinated to relax.”



For those over age 65 who are willing and able to travel to Duluth or Minneapolis, two large vaccination sites now are available depending on supply. More information may be found at the state's COVID site (<https://mn.gov/covid19/vaccine/find-vaccine/index.jsp>).

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 may be found at the county's website here: <https://www.co.itasca.mn.us/798/COVID-19-Coronavirus-Information>

-END-

Media briefing: 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 Feb. 18.

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).