



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

ITASCA COUNTY HITS ONE YEAR WITH COVID

(Grand Rapids, Minn., **March 29, 2021**) – March 29, 2020 marked the day Itasca County saw its first case of COVID-19 among residents. Exactly one year later, 32.3 percent of the county’s population has received at least their first dose of COVID vaccine, testing is readily accessible, schools have found ways to keep children learning, masks and disinfecting wipes are plentiful, and surviving businesses are poised for recovery.

“While COVID-19 is not done with us yet, the Itasca area can claim success in many important ways,” said Kelly Chandler, Itasca County Public Health division manager. “On behalf of public health, thank you to all who have been part of holding the line on COVID here in Itasca County. Whether you are a school nurse, in charge of vaccine logistics, a parent or shift worker, every sacrifice you have made and step you have taken to be safe has mattered and continues to matter.”

Itasca County will close out March with rising cases rates, similar to those seen in late December 2020. In the past seven days, 82 new cases have been identified here and 84 the week before that. Itasca County’s 14-day case rate per 10,000 residents is 38.4, up from a low of 14 in February. Minnesota Department of Health has alerted Itasca County Public Health that the B.1.1.7 virus variant is circulating in the county.

“Despite rising rates, we are not seeing corresponding hospitalizations and extreme illness,” said Chandler. “We also haven’t seen additional deaths due to COVID in several weeks. There’s reason to believe that vaccines are showing their benefits and will become increasingly available to those 16 and older in coming weeks. Stay strong, Itasca.”

Itasca County Public Health will hold a public clinic offering Moderna vaccines for those 18 and older on Wednesday, March 31 in Grand Rapids. To register, log in to <https://prepmo.health.state.mn.us//reg/3261605392>.

Vaccines now are regularly available in Itasca County at:

Bigfork Valley (Bigfork) – 16 and older, with waiting list and appointments at 218-743-4444 or email COVIDWaitList@BigforkValley.org.



Essentia Health Deer River (Deer River) – 16 and older, call 218-786-1750 or visit www.essentiahealth.org.

Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital (Grand Rapids) – as of March 31, expanding to those 16 and older with underlying medical conditions and those 50-64 regardless of current health status as described in Phase 1B, Tier 4 of State of MN's plan. Log into MyChart to schedule or call 218-326-7344.

Itasca County Public Health: working with specific groups and locations. Periodic public clinics will be available and announced at the department's Facebook page and through public announcements.

Scenic Rivers Health Care clinics in Bigfork, Northome, Big Falls, Cook, Tower and Floodwood are vaccinating as supplies allow. Additional vaccines will be available at a temporary vaccination clinic in Eveleth starting Tuesday March 30th. Call [877-541-2817](tel:877-541-2817).

Thrifty White Pharmacies (Grand Rapids): 16 or 18 and older (both Pfizer and Moderna available), www.thriftywhite.com or, for those needing registration assistance, you may call individual locations.

Walmart Pharmacies: availability is updated daily at www.walmart.com, including for the Grand Rapids location.

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>

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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 April 1.

Itasca County Public Health media contacts

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