



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

VACCINES REMAIN KEY IN RACE AGAINST VARIANT

(Grand Rapids, Minn., **April 13, 2021**) – Itasca County providers continue to have access to Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, despite a pause across the country in the use of Johnson & Johnson vaccines. In Itasca County 48 percent of those age 16 and older have received at least a first dose of vaccine.

Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital has cancelled all Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine clinics planned for this week and both Grand Itasca and Fairview Range are awaiting further guidance from the CDC before scheduling any additional Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine clinics.

Effective April 14, both Grand Itasca and Fairview Range now are able to offer anyone over 16 the Pfizer vaccine.

“We are in a race against the variant,” said Kelly Chandler, Itasca County Public Health department manager. “Thankfully, we have made good progress in Itasca County with vaccinations, but the B.1.1.7 variant is really making its presence known here. While we would like to take a break from COVID, this is the time that we have to show how strong Itasca County really can be. We’ve got to wear those masks, still keep distance and not gather, and don’t go to school or work when we have symptoms.

“If you have the opportunity to receive a vaccine, take it. One of the benefits is that, once fully vaccinated (14 days following final dose), you no longer have to quarantine if exposed to someone with COVID (including in schools). In the Itasca County area, we are definitely seeing that vaccines are keeping people of all ages from getting really sick.”

Positive cases of COVID-19 continue their sustained rise in Itasca County, including among those very young. Of the 98 new cases over the past seven days, only a few are older than 65. Most are in their 30s and 40s and several are ages three, four and five. The age group with the highest number of positive cases in Itasca County has been those 6 to 19 (a total of 624 over the past year).

The 14-day case rate per 10,000 Itasca County residents has risen to 45 from a low of 14 in February and a high of 129 in November. This rise is largely due to the presence of the B.1.1.7 variant, gathering among some youth, and family travel. The variant is more easily transmitted, especially among young children.



Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are generally available at clinics, hospitals and pharmacies through Itasca County. Appointment availability varies, depending on the facility's current supply.

Bigfork Valley (Bigfork) – 16 and older, with appointments scheduled as vaccine supplies are available. Call 218-743-4444, option 4 or email COVIDWaitList@BigforkValley.org to be added to contact list.

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

Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital (Grand Rapids) and Fairview Range (Hibbing) – 16 and older. Call Grand Itasca at 218-326-7344 or Fairview Range at 218-362-6937. Appointments for vaccines at either facility can also be made on MyChart.

Itasca County Public Health: working with specific groups and locations. Periodic public clinics announced at the department's Facebook page and website.

Scenic Rivers Health Care clinics in Bigfork, Northome, Big Falls, Cook, Tower and Floodwood are vaccinating as supplies allow. 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. Those needing registration assistance 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 15.

Itasca County Public Health media contacts

Kelly Chandler (218-327-6144 and Kelly.chandler@co.itasca.mn.us)