



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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As cases and hospitalizations rise, Munson Healthcare sends a reminder in advance of holiday weekend

As the Fourth of July weekend approaches bringing more visitors to northern Michigan, Munson Healthcare officials remind residents and visitors the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing.

Munson Healthcare Chief Medical Officer Christine Nefcy, M.D., said the health care system has seen an increase in the number of people testing positive and requiring hospitalization in the past few days.

“As communities and businesses continue to reopen it can be easy to let down our guard which creates greater potential for the virus to spread,” said Dr. Nefcy. “While our hospitals are not overwhelmed, the rising numbers are cause for concern and a reminder that each of us needs to wear a mask, wash hands, avoid large crowds and continue to practice social distancing over the holiday weekend.”

"July Fourth is a day for friends, family, barbecues, and celebrations. With COVID-19 cases spiking across the country and locally in the weeks since Memorial Day, these are anything but normal times. A typical Fourth of July celebration could further spread the virus and undo the progress made toward reopening our economy, so we are asking people to protect themselves and others by limiting the size of gatherings, celebrating outdoors, exercising physical distancing of 6 feet from one another, wearing masks, and washing their hands or using hand sanitizer regularly. Consider limiting celebration gatherings to those you are already in close contact with, like family members and housemates this year to prevent an increase in COVID 19 transmission locally," said Grand Traverse County Health Officer, Wendy Hirschenberger.

Lisa Peacock, Health Officer for Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department and the Health Department of Northwest Michigan, shared, “we are urging the public to take important safety precautions over the fourth of July weekend, and continuing throughout the busy summer months. Over the past week, we have noted concerning trends surrounding the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, at the local, state, and national level. There is no one safety measure that will fully protect us from COVID-19. Especially during the popular summer holidays, we all must do our part to STAY SAFE TO STAY OPEN.”

“Keeping our residents and visitors healthy and safe is imperative,” said Kevin Hughes, Health Officer for DHD#10. “While we realize that folks want to enjoy the holiday weekend, we also want to maintain our health and safety practices like wearing masks, social distancing, and good hygiene, to help slow the spread of COVID-19.”

As of Wednesday, Munson Medical Center reported three patients hospitalized with COVID-19 while Munson Healthcare Cadillac Hospital and Munson Healthcare Grayling Hospital each had two. The entire healthcare system had gone nearly two weeks without hospitalizing a COVID-19 patient. Dr. Nefcy added the health system is prepared for typical holiday volumes of Emergency Department and Urgent Care visits, as well as any surge related to COVID-19.

“While we do want people to enjoy the holiday weekend, we ask them to please do it safely, being mindful of both the heat and taking the appropriate measures to protect themselves and others from COVID-19, including our heroes on the frontlines.”

These measures include wearing a mask, social distancing at least six feet from others, avoiding large crowds and frequently washing and sanitizing hands. COVID-19 symptoms include fever or chills, cough, fatigue, shortness of breath, muscle aches, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and recent loss of taste or smell. Anyone experiencing one or more of these symptoms should immediately quarantine themselves and contact a medical provider.

For more information on COVID-19 in northern Michigan, go to **munsonhealthcare.org** and click on the orange banner at the top of the page.

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