



**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Laurel Johnson, PIO

O: 231-347-5628

[l.johnson@nwhealth.org](mailto:l.johnson@nwhealth.org)

[www.nwhealth.org](http://www.nwhealth.org)

**January 22, 2021**

**Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Update**

**Reminders to stay safe, healthy**

A new variant of the COVID-19 virus has been identified in Michigan and although this is not unusual and was anticipated, health officials say it reminds us of the need to continue to be careful to stay safe and healthy.

The new variant, known as B.1.1.7., was first identified in the United Kingdom and has spread to the U.S., including downstate Michigan. No cases have been identified in northern Michigan at this time, health officials report. Although it is more transmissible - meaning on average it will spread to more people compared to the average strain - the good news is that the current COVID-19 vaccine is effective against the variant and proper safety measures can help curb the spread of the more contagious variant.

“All viruses go through mutations regularly, and some - like the influenza (flu) virus, more than others,” said Dr. Josh Meyerson, Medical Director for the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. “This variant strain is not felt to cause more serious illness, it is not more lethal, and it can be curbed with current treatment regimens,” he said.

So how do you protect yourself from COVID-19 and its more contagious variant? “It is critical that we continue to take the necessary steps to reduce transmission including testing, isolation, quarantine, and mitigation measures such as masking, social distancing, and avoiding large gatherings,” Dr. Meyerson said. “All these steps become even more important with a more contagious strain.”

It is also important to be vaccinated. Health department clinics are offered weekly, by appointment only. Individuals eligible for vaccination, as determined by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, are asked to complete the [COVID-19 online pre-registration form](#) on the health department’s website or call the senior hotline at 231-715-5557 if they are unable to access the form or have any other barriers to receiving the vaccination. For those calling the hotline number to get on the health department list, please know this hotline is experiencing extremely high call volume and is overwhelmed with calls. It is recommended that you request a call back when prompted instead of staying on the line.

Today, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan is reporting 18 new cases: Antrim (4), Charlevoix (1), Emmet (12), and Otsego (1) counties. As of 4 p.m. today, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan is reporting:

- Total COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim (812), Charlevoix (953), Emmet (1,358), and Otsego (1,089).
- Recovered COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim (571), Charlevoix (771), Emmet (1,076) and Otsego (873).

*The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, visit [nwhealth.org](http://nwhealth.org).*

###

- Confirmed COVID-19 associated deaths in the following counties: Antrim (17), Charlevoix (11), Emmet (33), and Otsego (25).

The State of Michigan is reporting 546,468 cases and 14,070 deaths.

Stay up to date on the latest information in the Health Department of Northwest Michigan jurisdiction by [liking and following our Facebook page](#) and visiting our [COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#). To locate a testing facility, visit the [Michigan COVID-19 Test Finder website](#). To track the risk levels of COVID-19 pandemic indicators, visit the [MI Safe Start Map website](#). For more information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, visit the MDHHS [vaccine website](#) or the [CDC vaccine website](#).

*The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, visit [nwhealth.org](http://nwhealth.org).*

###