

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

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l.johnson@nwhealth.orgwww.nwhealth.org**February 8, 2021****Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Update****COVID variant case reported in Charlevoix County
from adult traveling out of state**

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan was notified late Sunday, Feb. 7, of the first identified case of the new COVID-19 variant, B.1.1.7 in our area, in an adult male in Charlevoix County. The case was identified through active surveillance by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Case investigation and contact tracing have been completed and no new cases of the variant have been identified in the northern Michigan region at this time.

According to health officials, it appears the adult male was contagious while traveling out of state and was tested upon returning to the region. The individual is past the contagious period and has since recovered.

“The identification of this variant strain in northern Michigan reminds us that we must continue to take steps to slow the spread of COVID-19 by wearing a mask, staying six feet apart, and avoiding indoor gatherings,” said Dr. Josh Meyerson, Medical Director for the health department. “Anyone who has any symptoms or may have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus, either here or during travel, should get tested and quarantine themselves,” he added.

The B.1.1.7 variant was first identified in Great Britain and is the result of mutations to the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the virus that causes COVID-19. The first case of the variant in Michigan was discovered downstate in January. Several other cases have been identified in Michigan since then. According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, early findings show that the B.1.1.7 variant may be associated with an increased risk of death, but more research needs to be done. Research also shows that the B.1.1.7 variant is more easily spread than other variants. Based on current evidence, current tests and vaccines for COVID-19 work against this new variant.

Important precautions to protect against COVID include:

- Get vaccinated for COVID-19 when available and eligible.
- Wear a mask covering your nose and mouth when around others.
- Stay six feet apart from others.
- Wash hands often.
- Ventilate indoor spaces.

Anyone in the community who needs a COVID test should know that COVID-19 testing is available weekly at the health department. No doctor’s order or symptoms are necessary to get tested. To locate the testing site closest to you, call the health department at 1-800-432-4121.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan continues to distribute COVID-19 vaccine to eligible individuals who work or live in Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego counties. The supply of vaccine is

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.

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limited, and it will take time to vaccinate everyone. The health department encourages individuals to be patient during this challenging time.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan reported 20 new cases on Saturday, February 6: Antrim (8), Charlevoix (1), Emmet (9), and Otsego (2) counties. On Sunday, February 7, 5 new cases were reported: Antrim (3), Charlevoix (0), Emmet (2), and Otsego (0) counties. Today, February 8, the health department is reporting 13 new cases: Antrim (4), Charlevoix (0), Emmet (8), 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 (881), Charlevoix (1,016), Emmet (1,441), and Otsego (1,126).
- Recovered COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim (726), Charlevoix (859), Emmet (1,187) and Otsego (954).
- Confirmed COVID-19 associated deaths in the following counties: Antrim (18), Charlevoix (11), Emmet (35), and Otsego (25).






The State of Michigan is reporting 566,630 cases and 14,797 deaths. As of February 5, 2021, cumulative recovered cases statewide are 498,495.

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](#).

New virus variants that spread more easily could lead to a rapid rise in COVID-19 cases

NOW, more than ever, it is important to slow the spread

-  Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time.
-  The virus that causes COVID-19 is known to acquire, on average, one new mutation every two weeks.
-  Some variants may be more transmissible, or less responsive to vaccines - so it is important to avoid exposure.
-  People traveling to Michigan and those who may have been exposed to the new variant should quarantine for 14 days (without the option to end quarantine early) and also get tested.

-  **Wear a mask**
A face shield may be worn over a mask for extra protection
-  **Stay at least 6 feet apart**
-  **Avoid indoor gatherings**
-  **Get tested**
-  **Get vaccinated when available to you**