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March 22, 2021

Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Update

**State announces new gathering capacity,
student athletic testing requirements**

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) updated its Gatherings and Mask epidemic order on Friday, allowing up to 20% capacity in large outdoor stadiums and arenas that establish infection control plans. The update also increased testing requirements for youth ages 13-19 to ensure athletes can safely participate in sports. The order went into effect today and remains in effect through April 19.

As spring approaches and we start to make plans for the warmer weather, Dr. Josh Meyerson, Medical Director with the Health Department of Northwest Michigan, reminds residents of the gathering mandates and the need to maintain preventative safety measures if we want to return to normalcy.

“Now isn’t the time to roll back our safety and public-health mitigation measures,” Dr. Meyerson said. “Getting everyone vaccinated is the most important step toward being able to eventually relax restrictions,” he said, adding he’s “cautiously optimistic” that if northern Michigan residents and visitors get vaccinated as soon as they can, mask up, maintain social distancing, and wash their hands, we will be able to have safe, small family gatherings this spring and summer.

The MDHHS order announced Friday allows [gatherings at outdoor stadiums and arenas](#) to be 20% of the venue’s capacity if the site:

- Establishes an infection control plan that complies with the protocols included in MDHHS’s document entitled [Enhanced Outdoor Stadium and Arena Guidance](#).
- Posts the mitigation plan publicly.
- Sends infection control plans to the local health department and MDHHS at least seven days before scheduled events.
- Administers a testing program as specified in [MDHHS’s Guidance for Athletics for all players](#).

Beginning April 2, athletes ages 13-19 are required to be tested consistent with the testing protocol specified in MDHHS Interim Guidance for Athletics. A mask must be worn unless a sports organizer has deemed a type of sport to be unsafe to play while masked and a more frequent testing protocol is followed. All participants across the entire organization must be tested consistent with the testing protocol specified in MDHHS Interim Guidance for Athletics. For more information on sports and athletics: [Coronavirus - Sports and Athletics \(michigan.gov\)](#).

“We all have a personal responsibility to slow the spread of the virus so we can end this pandemic together,” said Dr. Meyerson, adding that by April 5, all residents 16 and older are eligible for the safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine.

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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To help residents locate COVID-19 vaccination sites, the health department created a flyer available [here](#) listing additional vaccine providers, availability and clinic locations. Residents can also view vaccination sites throughout the state by visiting www.vaccinefinder.org. Anyone can assist an older adult who has not yet been vaccinated by registering on either the health department website or by calling the senior hotline at 231-715-5557, or their Senior Services or Commission on Aging office.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan reported 63 new cases on Saturday, March 20: Antrim (11), Charlevoix (7), Emmet (15), and Otsego (30) counties. On Sunday, March 21, 16 new cases were reported: Antrim (2), Charlevoix (2), Emmet (4), and Otsego (8) counties. Today, Monday, March 22, 39 new cases were reported: Antrim (6), Charlevoix (4), Emmet (8), and Otsego (21) counties. As of 4 p.m. today, the health department is reporting:

- Total COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim (1,079), Charlevoix (1,138), Emmet (1,622), and Otsego (1,451).
- Recovered COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim (900), Charlevoix (989), Emmet (1,394), and Otsego (1,042).
- Confirmed COVID-19 associated deaths in the following counties: Antrim (20), Charlevoix (13), Emmet (38), and Otsego (28).

The State of Michigan is reporting 629,612 cases and 15,903 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](#).

CUTLINE:

This graphic depicts the new Michigan Department of Health and Human Services mandate for gatherings, wearing masks, and testing for students participating in school athletic activities.



COVID-19

MDHHS EPIDEMIC ORDER

EFFECTIVE MARCH 22 THROUGH APRIL 19



Limits on attendance at residential gatherings.

- Face masks are required at all times, unless eating or drinking. Fully vaccinated individuals (persons for who at least two weeks has passed after receiving the final dose of a FDA-approved or authorized COVID-19 vaccine) may remove their mask as long as not exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.
- Residents should follow MDHHS [guidelines for safe social gatherings](#) and are encouraged to form a [“pod” of people](#) to socialize with consistently.

INDOORS: UP TO 15 PERSONS FROM 3 HOUSEHOLDS

OUTDOORS: UP TO 50 PERSONS



Limits on attendance at non-residential gatherings.

- Everyone must wear a face mask at all times, unless eating or drinking while seated in a designated area.
- Consumption of food or beverages is permitted only while seated in a designated area with a group of no more than 6 people.
- While eating or drinking, each group must be at least 6 feet apart and may not intermingle.

INDOORS: UP TO 25 PERSONS

OUTDOORS: UP TO 300 PERSONS

“Gathering” means any occurrence where two or more persons from more than one household are present in a shared space. Incidental gatherings (where people do not mingle with others outside their group) are excepted. For more information on gathering rules, please see the FAQs.



Face masks are still required.

Businesses, government offices, schools, child care organizations, operators of public transit, and all other gathering organizers must not allow indoor or outdoor gatherings of any kind unless they require individuals to wear a face mask. These entities may not assume that someone who enters the business without a face mask falls in one of the exceptions; but may accept an individual’s verbal representation that they are not wearing a face mask because they fall within a specified exception.



Retail and personal services

- Gatherings at a retail setting, library or museum, may not exceed 50% of total occupancy limits established by the fire marshal. Spaces for indoor dining, including food courts, must comply with the requirements for food service establishments.
- Gatherings to receive personal care services, including hair, nail, tanning, massage, spa, tattoo, body art, and piercing services are permitted by appointment. Masks must be worn at all times except if a customer is receiving a medical or personal care service for which the removal of the face mask is necessary.



Recreation and entertainment

- The following recreation and entertainment venues are open for enjoyment by individuals or groups of up to 25 persons: auditoriums; arenas; cinemas; concert halls; performance venues; sporting venues; stadiums; theaters; archery ranges; amusement parks; arcades; bingo halls; bowling alleys; gun ranges; laser tag; and trampoline parks.
 - Indoor Facilities: must not exceed 50% of the limits established by the fire marshal, and must not exceed an overall total of 300 people.
 - Outdoor Facilities: must not exceed 50% of the limits established by the fire marshal (if applicable), and must not exceed an overall total of 1000 people.
 - Everyone must wear a face mask at all times, unless eating or drinking while seated in a designated area.
 - Consumption of food or beverages is permitted only while seated in a designated area with a group of no more than 6 people.
 - Groups must be spaced 6 feet apart.
 - Large Indoor Stadiums/Arenas: up to 375 patrons for large venues with a seating capacity up to 10,000 seats, and up to 750 patrons for large venues with a seating capacity up to 10,000 seats



Outdoor stadiums or arenas

- Gatherings may be permitted up to 20% capacity in an OUTDOOR stadium or arena, if they do all of the following:
 - “Stadiums and arenas” are venues with fixed seating for at least 5,000 spectators.
 - Establish and abide by an infection control plan that complies with the protocols included in MDHHS’s Enhanced Outdoor Stadium and Arena Guidance.
 - Post their plan publicly.
 - Infection control plans must be made available to the local health department and MDHHS at least seven days before scheduled events.
 - Outdoor stadiums and arenas that do not establish and abide by an infection control plan in accordance with MDHHS’s Enhanced Outdoor Stadium and Arena Guidance must not exceed an overall total of 1000 people.
 - Sports organizers of events occurring at outdoor stadiums must administer a testing program as specified in MDHHS’s Interim Guidance for Athletics all players.



Food service

- Indoor and outdoor dining is only allowed until 11 p.m. and in designated dining areas where patrons are seated, groups of patrons do not exceed 6 people at a table, and each table is separated by at least 6 feet. See the [Outdoor Seating Infographic](#) for more details.
- **Indoor dining** at restaurants and bars is permitted up to 50% normal seating capacity or 100 persons, whichever is less.
- **Outdoor dining** is permitted at 100% capacity.
- Food service for takeout and delivery is permitted.
- Dining in an igloo, hut, or small tent is permitted so long as there is only one group inside.



Exercise, fitness, and sports

- **Exercise facilities:** Gatherings are permitted both indoors and outdoors for individual exercise, group classes, and individual and group instruction. Exercise facilities include gymnasiums; fitness centers; exercise studios; tracks; sports complexes, pools, yoga, dance, gymnastics, and cycling studios; ice rinks; roller rinks; and trampoline parks.
 - Attendance must not exceed 30% of the total occupancy limits.
 - There must be at least 6 feet of distance between each occupied workout station
 - Spaces and activities must be set up to maintain 6 feet between all persons at all times.
 - Masks are required, except for swimming.
- Capacity limits for ice and roller rinks must not exceed 10 persons per 1,000 square feet (approximately 175 people at once on a typically sized rink).
- **Youth Sports** Beginning April 2nd, athletes ages 13 – 19 are required to be tested consistent with the testing protocol specified in MDHHS Interim Guidance for Athletics. A mask must be worn unless a sports organizer has deemed a type of sport to be unsafe to play while masked and a more frequent testing protocol is followed. All participants across the entire organization must be tested consistent with the testing protocol specified in MDHHS Interim Guidance for Athletics.
- For more information on sports and athletics: [Coronavirus - Sports and Athletics \(michigan.gov\)](https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus-sports-athletics).

To read the complete MDHHS March 22, 2021, Epidemic Order, visit [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus). Questions or concerns can be emailed to COVID19@michigan.gov.