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Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Update

Variants, deaths occurring across region *Health department walk-in appointments available this week*

The spread of a more contagious COVID-19 virus variant across the state and northern Michigan is causing health officials to urge residents to get vaccinated at clinics this week. Illnesses and hospitalizations have increased, and several deaths were reported over the past week, including one in the 30–40-year-old range. We report this update with deep sympathy for the family and friends of those who have been lost and urge everyone to get vaccinated right away. Unfortunately, it is difficult to predict who will succumb to severe illness or death.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan, along with several neighboring health departments, has been notified of several cases of the B.1.429 (California) strain, which like the British variant previously identified in northern Michigan, is classified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as “a variant of concern.” This means this strain has increased transmissibility, and potentially more severe disease (e.g., increased hospitalizations or death). Although follow-up contact tracing and mitigation strategies - properly wearing a mask, maintaining a safe distance from others when indoors, and frequently washing hands - is the same as other variants, the best way to stop the spread of the virus and its mutations is to get vaccinated.

“Due to these variants spreading in our region, we are urging anyone 16 or older to get vaccinated as soon as possible. We have clinics across our jurisdiction this week and next, and in most cases are offering walk-in opportunities,” said Dr. Josh Meyerson, Medical Director with the health department. Dr. Meyerson also noted the CDC lifted the pause in the use of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine on Friday and recommended a warning label be added to the vaccine packaging noting the very rare blood clotting disorder risk. The J&J vaccine was paused for 10 days after 15 blood clotting disorder cases were reported in females aged 18-59 among the almost 8 million J&J vaccines administered. The decision to lift the pause is based on the experts’ determination that the benefits of again administering the vaccine greatly outweigh the very small degree of risk associated with its use, particularly now that the risk and treatment protocols are better understood.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan will soon resume offering J&J at some of its clinics. “Based on these scientific results that the vaccine is safe and effective, we will be administering the J&J vaccine, along with Pfizer and Moderna, at our clinics,” Dr. Meyerson said, noting “the risk is extremely rare - two per million - and the risk of mortality and severe illness from COVID infection is far greater,” he said. “At some of our clinics, people will have a choice of Johnson & Johnson and its convenience as a ‘one and done’ dosage, but we’ll also have another vaccine so they can decide what is best for them.”

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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The health department is allowing residents to self-schedule their first and second dose appointments for the COVID-19 vaccine at clinics throughout Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego counties. All clinics currently scheduled for April and early May are listed on the health department's website, www.nwhealth.org. The Pfizer vaccine is available for anyone 16 and older; a minor must be accompanied by a parent/guardian at a clinic. The Moderna and J&J vaccine is available for anyone 18 or older. Anyone needing assistance to make an appointment should call 2-1-1 or their local Commission on Aging or Senior Services Center. Walk-in appointments may be available, and residents can look for signage indicating walk-ins are welcome the day of a clinic.

Tuesday, April 27

- Ellison Place, 150 Dale Dr., Gaylord
9:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
Vaccine: **Pfizer** (open to 16 or older, parent/guardian must accompany minor)
To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)
- Helena Township Hall, 8751 Helena Rd., Alden
9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Vaccine: **Moderna** (must be 18 or older)
To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)

Wednesday, April 28

- Helena Township Hall, 8751 Helena Rd., Alden
9:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
Vaccine: **Moderna** (must be 18 or older)
To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)
- Ellison Place, 150 Dale Dr., Gaylord
9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Vaccine: **Pfizer** (open to 16 or older, parent/guardian must accompany minor)
To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)
- Boyne City Education Center, 321 South Park St., Boyne City (clinic entrance off Main St.)
3-6 p.m.
Vaccine: **Pfizer** (open to 16 or older, parent/guardian must accompany minor)
To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)

Thursday, April 29

- Emmet County Fairgrounds, 1129 Charlevoix Ave., Petoskey
12:30-6:30 p.m.
Vaccine: **Pfizer** (open to 16 or older, parent/guardian must accompany minor)
To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)
- Charlevoix County Shirley Roloff Northside Center (old elementary school), 13513 Division St., Charlevoix
1-6:30 p.m.
Vaccine: **Pfizer** (open to 16 or older, parent/guardian must accompany minor)
To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)

Friday, April 30

- Charlevoix County Shirley Roloff Northside Center (old elementary school), 13513 Division St., Charlevoix
9:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
Vaccine: **Pfizer** (open to 16 or older, parent/guardian must accompany minor)
To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)
- Health Department of Northwest Michigan offices, Mancelona Family Resource Center, 205 Grove St., Mancelona
1-4 p.m.
Vaccine: **Pfizer** (open to 16 or older, parent/guardian must accompany minor)
To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)
- Emmet County Fairgrounds, 1129 Charlevoix Ave., Petoskey
9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Vaccine: **Pfizer** (open to 16 or older, parent/guardian must accompany minor)
To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)

The calendar on the website www.nwhealth.org lists clinics that are scheduled for the remaining dates in April and dates in early May.

Saturday, April 24, 27 new cases were reported: Antrim (6), Charlevoix (-3), Emmet (9), and Otsego (15) counties, and 1 COVID-19 associated death in Antrim county. Sunday, April 25, 8 new cases were reported: Antrim (1), Charlevoix (4), Emmet (1), and Otsego (2) counties, and 2 COVID-19 associated deaths in Antrim (1) and Charlevoix (1) counties. Today, April 26, 35 new cases were reported: Antrim (4), Charlevoix (11), Emmet (12), and Otsego (8) counties. As of 4 p.m. today, the health department is reporting:

- Total COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim (1,505), Charlevoix (1,553), Emmet (2,176), and Otsego (2,154).
- Recovered COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Antrim (1,153), Charlevoix (1,134), Emmet (1,591), and Otsego (1,412).
- Confirmed COVID-19 associated deaths in the following counties: Antrim (26), Charlevoix (18), Emmet (40), and Otsego (34).

The State of Michigan reported 825,844 cases and 17,324 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](#).