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Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Update

Health Department: Take responsibility to help stop COVID-19 spread

Due to a rise in COVID-19 cases, increased hospitalizations and deaths, and the upcoming holidays, everyone should know the federal, state and local recommendations and take precautions to protect themselves, their families, and their loved ones.

“Hospitals, health care providers, emergency medical systems, and public health organizations are seeing the strain on their systems due to the surge,” said Lisa Peacock, Health Officer with the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. “We cannot face this on our own. It is up to all of us to take action to help stem the rapid increase in cases across our region,” she said, adding cases, hospitalizations and deaths are reaching or surpassing the peak numbers experienced in April 2020.

Those steps include:

- **Get vaccinated.** Whether you’re 5 or 95 or if it’s your first shot or a booster shot, vaccines are readily available. For a list of vaccine providers and locations in Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego counties, click [here](#). In addition, the CDC recently recommended anyone 18 and older should receive a booster vaccine. Eligible individuals may choose which vaccine they receive as a booster dose. Some people may prefer the vaccine type they originally received, and others may prefer to get a different type of booster vaccine. CDC’s recommendations now allow for this type of mix and match dosing for booster shots. Individuals should consult their healthcare provider if there is a question which vaccine is appropriate for them. To schedule an appointment with the Health Department of Northwest Michigan exclusively for children 5 to 11 years old, [click here](#). To schedule an appointment with the health department for anyone 12 and older, [click here](#). A parent/guardian must accompany anyone younger than 18 to a COVID-19 clinic. Please bring an insurance card to the appointment. Anyone with questions or unable to find a time or date that works for them and/or their child may call the health department at 800-432-4121.
- **Take steps to protect yourself, your family, your loved ones and your community.** On Friday, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) issued a [Public Health Advisory](#) recommending everyone over the age of 2 should wear a face mask at indoor gatherings regardless of their vaccination status. In addition, establishments should implement a policy to ensure that all persons entering or seeking services, including employees, wear a mask. This face mask advisory remains in effect until further notice. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) also issued recommendations for safe gatherings including getting vaccinated, wearing masks, social distancing and washing hands. Mask wearing is considered an effective mitigation strategy and is recommended for all in public indoor settings in areas of high transmission and indoors for those who are not vaccinated. Practice social distancing, when possible, especially in places where the vaccination status of those around you is unknown.

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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- **Get tested if you are exposed or have symptoms.** Anyone with signs or symptoms of COVID-19 should get tested regardless of vaccination status or prior infection. If you get tested because you have symptoms or were potentially exposed to the virus, you should stay away from others while you wait for your test result. Find a test site at <http://www.nwhealth.org/covid19main.html>.
- **Complete your case investigation survey.** In recent weeks the health department case investigation staff have been working to reach all newly confirmed or probable individuals in order to provide support and determine close contacts. The health department is asking individuals to complete the online Patient Education Genius (PEG) survey as soon as possible after receiving the link via text or email. This survey collects information from individuals who test positive for COVID-19 including demographics, symptoms, occupation, attendance at public events or gatherings, and people with whom they may have been in close contact. The survey does not gather any private information like social security numbers, personal passwords, or banking details. It also provides links to important information about isolation and quarantine as well as self-care. With the high number of cases being reported to the health department each day, staff are not able to contact every affected person in a timely manner. Therefore, it is important for everyone to understand the steps they should take if they test positive or are exposed. For those steps, [click here](#). If you have questions, please contact the public health information line at 800-386-5959.
- **Self-reporting your positive COVID-19 test result.** If you used a home COVID-19 test and received a positive result, please notify the health department by completing the [self-reporting survey](#). Doing so notifies the health department of your positive status and allows us to contact you directly or send you a link to the case investigation survey for resources and guidance during your isolation period. See resource – [if you test positive for COVID-19](#) for more information.

“As we approach this holiday week, we may wish to count our blessings including good health. And good health starts with taking responsibility to keep yourself and those around you safe,” Peacock said. “We wish all of you a happy thanksgiving and hope you enjoy it in good health and safely with family and friends.”

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](#).