



MEDIA CONTACT:
Laurel Johnson, PIO
O: 231-347-5628
ljohnson@nwhealth.org
www.nwhealth.org

November 29, 2021

Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Update

**New COVID-19 variant identified World Health Organization
*No cases in US but prevention urged***

On November 26, the World Health Organization (WHO) classified a new variant, B.1.1.529, as a “Variant of Concern.” Named Omicron, no cases of this variant have been identified in the U.S. to date. The new strain is causing health officials to urge residents to use precautionary measures to curb the spread of COVID-19.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is following the details of this new variant, first reported to the WHO by South Africa. CDC officials expressed gratitude to the South African government and its scientists who have openly communicated with the global scientific community and continue to share information about this variant with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and CDC.

“We know what it takes to prevent the spread of COVID-19,” said Dr. Josh Meyerson, Medical Director for the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. “Regardless of the strain, we all need to take preventative measures to stop the spread of this disease and keep ourselves, our families, and our communities safe.”

The health department, as well as the CDC recommends people follow [prevention strategies](#) such as wearing a mask in public indoor settings in areas of substantial or high [community transmission](#), washing your hands frequently, and physically distancing from others. CDC also recommends that everyone 5 years and older protect themselves from COVID-19 by getting [fully vaccinated](#). CDC encourages a COVID-19 vaccine booster dose for all those who are eligible.

Travelers to the U.S. should continue to follow [CDC recommendations for traveling](#).

For a list of vaccine providers and locations in Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego counties, click [here](#). 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.

To find a test site in the area, visit <http://www.nwhealth.org/covid19main.html>.

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.

###

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](#).