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Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Update

CDC revises mask guidance for communities where hospitals seeing less strain on capacity

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced Friday it is relaxing its mask guidance for communities where hospitals are not under high strain of COVID-19 cases. Under the new guidance, nearly 70% of the U.S. population lives in an area [considered to be low or medium risk](#), and residents there are advised they can go indoors without masks.

The CDC recommends continued mask use in communities where serious cases of COVID-19 are straining the health system and of course for anyone who needs a higher level of protection for themselves or their family.

“As of Monday, Feb. 28, all counties in our jurisdiction are at medium or low risk,” said Lisa Peacock, Health Officer for the Health Department of Northwest Michigan, which includes the counties of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego. “[To determine the COVID-19 community level](#), the CDC looks at a combination of three metrics – new COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population in the past 7 days, the percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients, and total new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the past 7 days.”

According to the CDC, new COVID-19 admissions and the percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied represent the current potential strain on the health system. Data on new cases acts as an early warning indicator of potential increases in health system strain in the event of a COVID-19 surge. Using these data, the COVID-19 community level is classified as low, medium, or high. Currently in the Health Department of Northwest Michigan jurisdiction, Charlevoix and Emmet counties are considered at “low” risk and Antrim and Otsego counties are labeled “medium” risk. To check your county’s COVID-19 community level, [click here](#). The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services also recently released [updated guidance on masking](#) as well as an [updated summary of pandemic phases](#) indicating our state is currently in a phase of Recovery.

“The move to ease up on universal masking reflects current conditions at this phase of the coronavirus pandemic, including widespread immunity through vaccination and prior infection as well as better access to testing and treatments,” Peacock noted. “Regardless, there may be groups of people who want to or should continue wearing a mask, including anyone with underlying health conditions, those who live with someone with high risk factors, anyone who is immunocompromised, as well as those who just feel safer wearing a mask.” See the CDC [when and where to wear a mask or respirator](#).

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 importance of being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 continues to be emphasized by health officials:

- [Get vaccinated and/or get your booster.](#)
- [Get tested](#) if you are exposed to COVID-19 or feeling any symptoms.
- [Isolate and quarantine](#) if you are exposed.

In addition, the health department is promoting testing at its new mobile unit. Walk-ins are welcome at the mobile unit following locations:

- Tuesday, March 1: E-Free Church 1649 E M-32 Gaylord, 8:15 am - 12:15 pm
- Wednesday, March 2: HDNW 205 Grove St. Mancelona, 8:15 am - 12:15 pm
- Thursday, March 3: HDNW 220 W. Garfield Charlevoix, 8:15 am - 12:15 pm

Additional testing locations and dates are available at nwhealth.org/covidtest.

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](#).



Walk-ins welcome, or pre-register to save time at:
nwhealth.org/covidtest

Our Mobile Testing Unit is on the move! COVID-19 testing **this week:**

Tuesday, March 1st:
E-Free Church
1649 E M-32
Gaylord
8:15 am - 12:15 pm

Wednesday, March 2nd:
HDNW
205 Grove St.
Mancelona
8:15 am - 12:15 pm

Thursday, March 3rd:
HDNW
220 W. Garfield
Charlevoi
8:15 am - 12:15 pm

ADDITIONAL TESTING LOCATIONS/DATES AVAILABLE AT [**NWHEALTH.ORG/COVIDTEST**](http://NWHEALTH.ORG/COVIDTEST)