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August 3, 2021

Central and Northern Michigan regional health departments urge residents to take precautionary measures as COVID-19 variant spreads

The Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance, which represents local health departments across central and northern Michigan, is urging residents to take cautionary measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 across the region as some counties within the region move to an elevated level of transmission of the virus.

Over the past week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) moved several northern Michigan counties from “moderate” to “substantial” and “high” levels on the CDC’s [Level of Community Transmission Tracker Map](#), and issues changes in their recommendations for protective measures.

The Alliance is providing residents with this information to be informed and take precautionary measures to protect themselves, their families, and their community from the spread of COVID-19, especially the highly contagious Delta variant. It is important that businesses and community members understand how to monitor these changing risk levels and take the necessary steps to protect themselves and those around them, Alliance officials said.

Cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are increasing across the United States and region, largely fueled by the Delta variant which is much more contagious than past versions of the virus. Because of this upward trend, the CDC recommends that all people, regardless of vaccination status, in areas of substantial or high transmission should:

- Get vaccinated.
- Get tested if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
- Get tested 3-5 days following a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days after exposure or until a negative test result.
- Isolate if they have tested positive for COVID-19 in the prior 10 days or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
- Follow any applicable federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations.
- Wear a mask in public indoor settings if they are in an area of substantial or high transmission. Fully vaccinated people might choose to mask regardless of the level of transmission, if they have an increased health risk.
- The CDC bases its recommendations on the latest data. New data = new guidance. When the CDC revised its guidance in May, the delta variant represented 1% of all cases. Today that number is more than 80%. The CDC continues to recommend that policies be based on local transmission rates.



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The highest spread of cases and severe outcomes is happening in places with low vaccination rates. The COVID-19 vaccination is the most effective prevention measure against this virus. Residents who are especially vulnerable, including the immunocompromised and the elderly, are at particular risk for infection and should be very cautious. As always, staying home when you are sick, keeping your distance from others whenever possible, and being cautious about attending large gatherings are measures that can be taken to protect yourself and the vulnerable around you.

“The COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, and we anticipate the situation will continue to change,” said Lisa Peacock, Health Officer with the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department and Health Department of Northwest Michigan. “For this reason, we want to empower our communities to understand the changing risk levels. Getting vaccinated is our most powerful tool to reduce the spread and further mutation. However, due to the currently increasing prevalence of the more contagious Delta variant, we urge residents - including those fully vaccinated - to practice caution when out in public, gathering, or traveling. Let’s not let our number of cases and hospitalizations across our region get worse,” added Peacock, vice-chair of the Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance.

As northern Michigan’s population swells in the summer with visitors and residents traveling across the region, Dr. Joshua Meyerson, Medical Director of Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department, District Health Department #4, and the Health Department of Northwest Michigan, noted that the status of COVID-19 in one county versus another is a moving target and will change frequently.

“Individuals need to take personal responsibility to protect themselves, their families and friends, and their community,” Dr. Meyerson said. “We all need to be together on this and get vaccinated, get tested if you’re not feeling well or been exposed, and isolate if you test positive for COVID-19.”

Anyone 12 and older is urged to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. To locate a vaccination clinic near you, visit your local health department website:

- Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department www.BLDHD.org
- Health Department of Northwest Michigan www.nwhealth.org/
- Grand Traverse County Health Department www.gtcountymi.gov/2211/Health
- District Health Department No. 4 www.dhd4.org/
- Central Michigan District Health Department www.cmdhd.org/
- District Health Department No. 2 www.dhd2.org/
- District Health Department #10 www.dhd10.org/



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