

# ITASCA COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

## ITASCA RESOURCE CENTER

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Visit us at: [www.co.itasca.mn.us](http://www.co.itasca.mn.us)

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

### ITASCA COUNTY COVID-19 CASES TICK UPWARD AGAIN

(Grand Rapids, Minn., **June 29, 2020**) – One more case of COVID-19 among Itasca County residents was confirmed over the weekend, bringing the total number of laboratory-confirmed cases here to 64, according to Kelly Chandler, Itasca County Public Health department manager. No additional Itasca residents have died because of COVID-19.

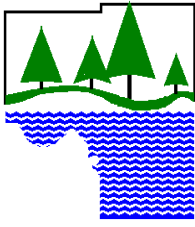
“We did have additional positive tests here of persons in their 20’s, but their formal ZIP codes were elsewhere so they will be reflected as cases in other counties,” said Chandler. “When a contact investigation is completed, and if there were close contacts in Itasca, involved people will be notified that they were in contact with a known positive COVID-19 case and will be offered instructions to stay safe and prevent further spread.

“We are monitoring what is occurring in other areas of the state and country as positive cases are rising in a younger demographic. There have been four bars associated with clusters of COVID-19 in Minnesota this past week. Younger persons are not immune to contracting or spreading COVID-19, and they may be working in essential sectors such as childcare or healthcare or have family members who have chronic health conditions or are elderly and could have increased complications if they were to contract COVID-19.

“We know community members are anxious to get back to their typical summer activities and quarantine fatigue is occurring. The pandemic is not over, though, and there are states reversing their reopening or slowing their reopening due to a rise in positive cases.

“We ask the community to continue to do their part to slow the spread of COVID-19. Please social distance, wash your hands, stay home when sick, cover your coughs and sneezes and wear a mask in public spaces.”

As mask-wearing becomes increasingly common in Minnesota, Mayo Clinic confirms that wearing cloth face masks is effective. “Yes, face masks combined with other preventive measures, such as frequent hand-washing and social distancing, help slow the spread of the virus,” Mayo Clinic staff wrote in a recent statement. “So why weren't face masks recommended at the start of the pandemic? At that time, experts didn't yet know the extent to



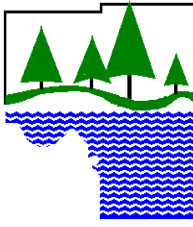
which people with COVID-19 could spread the virus before symptoms appeared. Nor was it known that some people have COVID-19 but don't have any symptoms. Both groups can unknowingly spread the virus to others.”

Stakeholders from across Itasca County have come together to create “Mask Up Itasca,” a collaborative effort to appreciate and support individuals and businesses who protect others by wearing face coverings during this pandemic. For example, free face masks have been produced for distribution throughout the region with the “Itasca Strong” logo, along with “Mask Up Itasca” signage.



“Grand Itasca Foundation was happy to partner to with Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation and Blandin Foundation to make another source of cloth masks available to individuals, businesses and organizations,” said Kelly Kirwin, Director of Foundation and Community Relations at Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital.

Itasca Strong-branded masks will be available at participating businesses throughout Itasca County starting this week. For example, Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce will have them available in their Visitor Center on Wednesdays through Fridays, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. while supplies last. Businesses and organizations wishing to have masks for distribution, including signage, may use an online request form: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GCG7DCQ>



Complimentary volunteer-sewn cloth masks also remain available through Elder Circle in Grand Rapids. Contact Elder Circle to make plans for non-contact pickup at their office (218-999-9233 x277 or [ecircle@eldercircle.org](mailto:ecircle@eldercircle.org)). Please limit to two masks per adult. Both elastic and tie-style are available. Donations of masks, fabric or elastic may also be dropped off in a yellow and black bin cabled to a metal fence outside of the ElderCircle office at the Itasca Family YMCA (please include your name and contact info). Monetary donations in support of mask-making also are appreciated and can be sent via postal service to ElderCircle, 400 River Road Suite 1, Grand Rapids, MN 55744.

Itasca County's Message Center is available for those with COVID-related issues and needs at 218-327-6784. Response calls will be made between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

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Helpful resources:

Mayo Clinic: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/coronavirus-mask/art-20485449>

Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-make-cloth-face-covering.html>