



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*

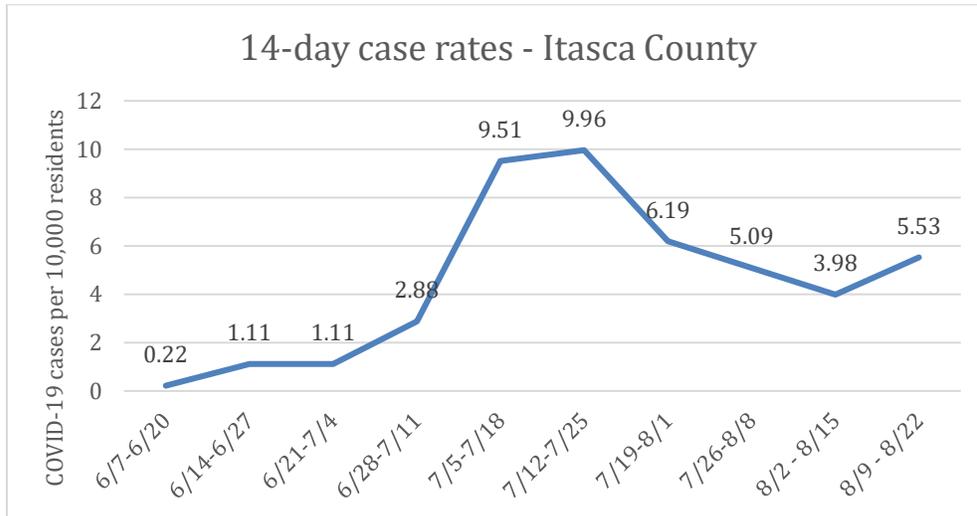
ITASCA COUNTY RESIDENT TAKEN BY COVID

(Grand Rapids, Minn., **September 3, 2020**) – Itasca County Public Health has received word today of a COVID-related death, the county’s first since early June. With sorrow, we mark the passing of a man in his 90s today. No further details will be shared due to privacy concerns.

“We mourn with the community on the loss of our neighbor, friend and family member,” said Kelly Chandler, department director, Itasca County Public Health. “Our sympathies to all who have experienced the loss of a loved one to COVID. Itasca County is not immune to the devastation of this disease and we must do everything we can to protect each other, especially those most vulnerable.”

As of 9:00 a.m. Sept. 3, 208 total Itasca County residents have tested positive for COVID-19, eight more than last reported four days ago (Aug. 31). Itasca County public health officials are aware of 22 residents who have been hospitalized at some point during their illness.

No additional cases have been identified from the cluster of COVID-19 infections diagnosed at an apartment building last week in Deer River.



Source: Minnesota Department of Health



As Minnesota schools reopen, Minnesota Department of Health provides trend data to guide districts' approaches. The department has suggested that a rate of 10 positives per 10,000 residents over a 14-day period is a key threshold and would indicate uncontrolled spread. Itasca County nearly reached that level following the Fourth of July (9.96), then fell in early August. Data released on Sept. 3 by Minnesota Department of Health shows Itasca County cases once again trending upward as it heads into the Labor Day holiday.

Also this week, Minnesota Department of Health has released revised and specific [guidance](#) for those involved in schools, youth and child care programs. This decision tree is the base of how area schools will handle in-school situations, said David Pace, superintendent for Independent School District 316 (Greenway) and chair of the Itasca Area Schools Collaborative.

"Cases in Itasca County are relatively controlled, but Labor Day weekend behavior could create a different situation as we head into fall," said Anna Anttila, Itasca County public health nurse and emergency preparedness coordinator. "It is critical to be cautious this weekend with gatherings, and to do all of the other things that we know help: face coverings, keeping six-foot distances, avoiding gatherings (even outdoors) that put people in close contact, staying home if you don't feel well, etc.

"For those who have been in close contact (within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes, including within your household) with someone confirmed to have COVID-19, the person should quarantine and stay home from all activities for 14 days since the last day of contact with the positive case. Public health officials, commonly known as "contact tracers," will provide guidance on testing and other supports, so please accept their call."

Tests for COVID-19 are available at several facilities throughout Itasca County, guided by Minnesota Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control protocols.

#### Bigfork Valley and Scenic Rivers

COVID-19 testing continues to be available in Bigfork through collaborative efforts between Bigfork Valley Hospital and Scenic Rivers Health Services Clinic. Curbside testing is available by appointment from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Urgent testing for emergency room transfers, hospitalized patients, symptomatic senior services residents and tenants, surgical patients, and ill healthcare workers at Bigfork Valley may be eligible for in-house testing with a minimum turnaround time of 15 minutes. Rapid testing is supply-dependent and may be extended to additional patients if supplies become more readily available.

Bigfork Valley also utilizes two third-party labs, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), and LabCorp. Both currently have a turnaround time of two to three days to receive results.



Scenic Rivers also utilizes Mayo Clinic Laboratories. At this time, send-out tests have a two- to three-day turnaround time.

Patients with questions about getting tested for COVID-19 in Bigfork should call Scenic Rivers at 218-743-3232 or 1-877-541-2817 (option #5) to speak to a triage nurse. For other questions or concerns, please contact your primary care provider.

#### Essentia Health-Deer River

Essentia Health-Deer River (115 10th Avenue NE, Deer River) offers COVID-19 testing seven days a week, from 10 a.m. to noon. Patients are encouraged to start an E-Visit at the [Essentia Health website](#). E-Visits for screening of COVID-19 symptoms are free, though testing ordered as a result of the screening will be billed to your insurance company.

These tests are administered curbside at Essentia Health-Deer River; patients are asked to please remain in their vehicles, where they will be approached by a nurse. Tests are processed through Mayo Clinic Laboratories, and results are available within 2-3 days.

For emergency department patients and other hospitalized patients in need of a more immediate result, Essentia offers a rapid test with a turnaround time of less than one hour. These tests are for patients with specific symptoms; the test you receive will be determined by your E-Visit.

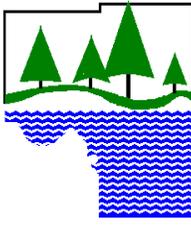
Symptoms of COVID-19 may appear 2-14 days after exposure and could include a fever of more than 100 degrees, cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle aches, headaches, loss of smell/taste and exhaustion, among others. If you're experiencing these symptoms, start an E-Visit. You also can call our nurse care line at 1 (800) 714-4646.

Essentia thanks you for taking precautions aimed at slowing the spread of this virus. Please continue to wear face coverings and practice social distancing when possible. Also, wash your hands frequently and, if you're not feeling well, stay home.

#### Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital

Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital is now offering COVID-19 testing to all people with the following symptoms: chills, congestion, cough (new or worsened), difficulty breathing/shortness of breath, fatigue, fever of 100 degrees or more (subjective or confirmed), headache, loss of taste or smell, muscle pain and/or sore throat. Asymptomatic patients may also qualify for testing. These guidelines continue to change, so please call Grand Itasca at 218-326-3401 for current testing criteria.

If a patient develops symptoms of COVID-19 and wishes to be tested, they should call Grand Itasca at 218-326-3401 to be scheduled for curbside testing. If a patient is asymptomatic (without symptoms) and has had known exposure to someone who tests positive for COVID-19, the patient should call Grand Itasca at 218-326-3401 to request a telephone visit with a



provider. If the provider determines that the patient meets criteria for testing, they will then be scheduled for curbside testing.

Most COVID-19 tests are sent to the lab at M Health Fairview in the Twin Cities for processing. Results are back within 72 hours. Curbside testing is available 7 days/week from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Patients must have an appointment prior to coming for curbside testing.

Itasca residents with questions or concerns may leave them at the Itasca County COVID message line, with calls returned 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday – Friday. The Itasca COVID line number is 218-327-6784.

**Helpful link:** Decision tree for people in schools, youth and child care programs - <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf>

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*Note to media: Itasca County Health Department will host 30-minute press briefings on Thursdays at 10:00 a.m. as needed. The next briefing will be Sept. 17. Recordings available. Contact [anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us](mailto:anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us) for more information.*

Itasca County Public Health media contacts

Kelly Chandler (218-327-6144 and [Kelly.chandler@co.itasca.mn.us](mailto:Kelly.chandler@co.itasca.mn.us)) or Anna Anttila ([anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us](mailto:anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us)).