

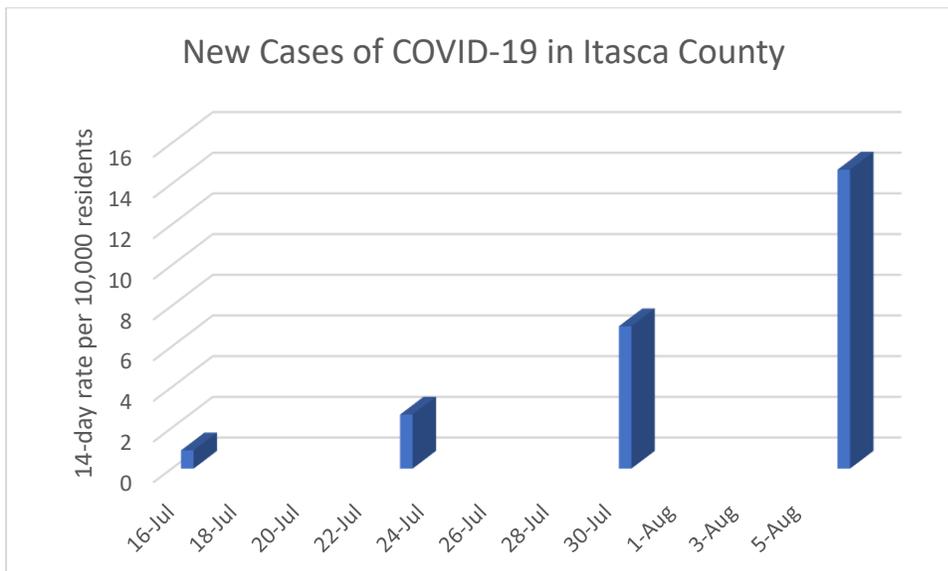
ITASCA COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ITASCA COUNTY NOW IN 'SUBSTANTIAL SPREAD' CATEGORY

(Grand Rapids, Minn. – Aug. 10, 2021) – Itasca County is catching up with other communities facing rapid spread of COVID-19 infection. After a July with only a handful of new cases, 78 Itasca residents were diagnosed with COVID between July 26 and Aug. 8 and 49 of those were in the past week.

When measured in terms of a 14-day case rate per 10,000 residents, Itasca County has grown quickly to 14.7.



Sadly, deaths due to COVID in Itasca County also continue to climb. Most recently, the county lost a female in her 80s, bringing total COVID-related deaths here to 69.

Itasca County has moved into Centers for Disease Control's "substantial spread" range, which means that masks are recommended in indoor spaces regardless of vaccination status. A person's risk for infection is directly related to the risk for exposure to other infected persons, which is largely determined by the extent of virus circulation in the surrounding community, according to CDC.

"The trend in Itasca County does not look good right now. But now we know that vaccines make the difference," said Kelly Chandler, Itasca County Public Health division manager. "We still can prevent COVID from taking hold of Itasca County again by getting vaccinated and staying home if you're sick."

The percentage of all Itasca residents eligible (those 12 and older) receiving their first dose of vaccine has bumped up to 57 percent. When including those not eligible because of age, 49 percent of Itasca residents have begun their vaccinations.

Pfizer (for those over age 12) and Moderna (for those over age 18) vaccines are widely available through Itasca County clinics and pharmacies.

Itasca County has received a small allotment of single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine for those 18 and older and will offer it during two clinics: Aug. 11, 10:00 a.m. to noon, at Itasca Resource Center in Grand Rapids and Aug. 14 during Deer River's Party in the Park. The J&J vaccine is otherwise no longer available in Itasca County and supplies throughout Minnesota are in high demand.

Another good opportunity for students ages 12 and older is to get their Pfizer vaccine during sports physicals. Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital is offering free sports physicals through Aug. 12, 5:00-7:00 p.m.

Anyone 12 and older is eligible for a \$100 gift card if they receive their first vaccine between July 30 and Aug. 15 (see the state's COVID website at <https://mn.gov/covid19/100/>).

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 through Friday. The Itasca COVID line number is 218-327-6784.

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Note to media: An online press briefing via ZOOM is scheduled for Aug. 19, 2021, 10:00 a.m., with a focus on back-to-school plans for area schools.

Itasca County Public Health media contact: Kelly Chandler, 218-327-6144
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