



**ITASCA COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
ITASCA RESOURCE CENTER  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **COVID infections spreading quickly in Itasca County among those not yet vaccinated**

*Nearly all who are vaccinated have avoided infection*

(Grand Rapids, Minn. – Sept. 14, 2021) – While rising COVID-19 rates have begun to peak in some other parts of the United States, that is not the case in Itasca County. During each of the past two weeks, 100 more Itasca area residents have been diagnosed with COVID infections. The most current 14-day case rate per 10,000 residents is 43.7, up significantly from last week (39.2) and from early July, when the rate was less than one.

Impacts here of rising case rates are becoming more obvious, such as in northern Itasca County, where spiking COVID rates have forced Bigfork schools to temporarily enforce masking for all students. Each area school has a mitigation plan based on COVID spread in their community, which can be found at their websites.

“Our hospital has been full more often than not lately. We’re seeing an increase in patients overall, including a recent significant increase in patients with COVID. The same is true for the hospitals that we typically transfer patients to as well, which creates a backlog of patients while we try to find them a bed.” says Jean MacDonell, President/CEO of Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital. “We are continuing to encourage masking when in public (including in schools), getting vaccinated and getting tested after exposure or when experiencing symptoms. We need people to take these things seriously so we can all make it through this surge.”

A key factor for Itasca County remains vaccination. Among those who have been vaccinated in the county since March 2021, less than one percent (.86 percent) have subsequently tested positive for COVID and none have died. Vaccinations are widely available at local clinics and pharmacies and through special events. As of Sept. 13, half of *all* county residents and 58 percent of those 12 and older have received at least their first dose of COVID vaccine.

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 Sept. 16, 10:00 a.m., featuring local health professionals sharing what is known today about COVID-19 prevention and treatments.*

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