



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

**BLUE LIGHTS WILL HONOR THOSE ON THE FRONT LINES OF THE PANDEMIC**

**PROJECT  
BLUE  
LIGHT**

**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**JANUARY 24 - 31**  
**#THANKYOUWITHBLUE**

SHOW YOUR *Support* FOR  
**FRONTLINE  
WORKERS**

*The fight continues as Itasca infections still surging*

(Grand Rapids, Minn., Jan. 20, 2022) – COVID-19 trends in Itasca County continue to get worse and residents are encouraged to prepare for further impacts. In the midst of pandemic stress, local communities are invited to participate in Project Blue Light the last week of January, a regional effort to honor those on the front lines of keeping us safe.

Itasca County's 14-day case rate per 10,000 residents remains extremely high at 114 (even higher than last week's surge to 104). This stems from the diagnosis here of 557 new cases diagnosed over the past two weeks.

Itasca County has, sadly, seen two additional deaths due to COVID, males in their 60s and 70s.

“Brace yourselves,” said Kelly Chandler, Itasca County Public Health division manager. “COVID is sweeping through our towns, families, schools and teams. Thankfully, 61.6 percent of all eligible residents are vaccinated, which is making their symptoms less severe. At this point, though, it’s important to understand how to survive this surge and how to protect the most vulnerable among us. It’s also not too late to get vaccinated; we are blessed with good supplies throughout the county.”

Free COVID vaccines are available at the Scenic Rivers clinic in Bigfork, Essentia Health in Deer River and Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital in Grand Rapids, as well as at most area pharmacies. COVID tests are available throughout the county, as well as free online through the federal website [COVIDtests.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19/testing) and Minnesota’s at-home saliva test available at [vaulthealth.com](https://www.vaulthealth.com).

For those dealing with a new COVID infection, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention calculates Day 0 as the first day of symptoms or a positive viral test. Day 1 is the first full day after symptoms developed or a test specimen was collected. If you have COVID-19 or have symptoms, CDC says to isolate for at least five days and take extra precautions for at least 10 full days (wear a well-fitted mask, avoid travel, avoid being around people who are high risk). CDC also suggests that, if you tested positive for COVID-19 or have symptoms, wear a well-fitted mask if you must be around others in your home.

“I would add that those experiencing significant symptoms and those especially vulnerable should stay in touch with their physicians,” said Chandler. “Itasca providers have access to medicines and therapies that can be extremely helpful but may need to be given early. Do not suffer in silence.”

Updated information about quarantine and isolation can be found at the [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) website. Many organizations, including schools, have guidelines specific to their facilities.

In honor of those who have been working for our communities day and night throughout the pandemic to keep us safe, buildings throughout Itasca County and the Arrowhead region will be sporting blue-colored lighting between Jan. 24 and 31. Project Blue Light is organized by the Arrowhead Regional Public Health and Tribal Health Departments. On social media, stories and tributes can be followed through the [#thankyouwithblue](https://twitter.com/thankyouwithblue) tag.

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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