



ITASCA COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

ITASCA RESOURCE CENTER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COVID INFECTIONS EVEN LOWER, HOSPITALIZATIONS AND DEATHS STILL HIGH IN ITASCA COUNTY

(Grand Rapids, Minn., **Feb. 17, 2022**) – New cases of COVID-19 continue their welcome slide in Itasca County, although hospitalizations and deaths trail at high levels.

Between Feb. 10 and 16, Itasca residents have experienced 90 new laboratory-confirmed COVID infections, less than half that of the previous week (202). When measured as a 14-day rate per 10,000 residents, Itasca County now stands at 68.5, down from an all-time high three weeks ago of 172. A 14-day rate of 5 per 10,000 residents is considered under control. These data do not include at-home (antigen) testing.

Hospitalizations and deaths, unfortunately, still continue to be high among Itasca County residents. Over the past two weeks, the deaths of seven Itasca County residents were attributed to COVID, raising the area's pandemic total to 137. According to data published by Johns Hopkins University, Itasca County has a significantly higher rate of COVID-related deaths than Minnesota overall (283.2 deaths/100k versus 205.1 deaths/100k).

Hospitalizations due to COVID among Itasca County residents have been significantly higher since October 2021. The current seven-day average of COVID-positive, hospitalized Itascans is 10.

Vaccinations among Itasca residents continue to creep higher, with 62.2 percent of those ages five and older getting at least their first dose. Vaccines are widely available through clinics, pharmacies and special public health events in the area.

"It's a great relief to see the rate of infection come down. With the arrival of the Omicron variant in Itasca County last fall, Itasca County has really suffered," said Kelly Chandler, Itasca County Public Health division manager.

"Hospitalizations, deaths and the sheer number of our neighbors still experiencing residual effects of infection are grim reminders that COVID remains very serious in our area. We can both celebrate and still take care, knowing that we have responsibilities both for ourselves and for those around us."

Itasca residents with questions or concerns may leave them at the Itasca County COVID message line, with calls returned 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The Itasca COVID line number is 218-327-6784.

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