



ITASCA COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

ITASCA RESOURCE CENTER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IS HEALTH ON YOUR BACK-TO-SCHOOL CHECKLIST?

Up-to-date vaccinations help keep kids in school

(Grand Rapids, Minn., **Aug. 16, 2022**) – As Itasca County prepares to enter a new school year, now is the time to make sure all vaccines are up to date and healthy routines such as handwashing are reinforced.

“This would be a great time to check your child’s vaccinations,” said Kelly Chandler, Itasca County Public Health division manager. “Being vaccinated keeps kids in school and helps limit spread of transmissible disease to others in families, teams and school and care settings. And many children have gotten behind on their routine immunizations during the pandemic.”

It’s not too late if your child has fallen behind on their vaccinations. As a reminder, children are due for routine vaccines for kindergarten, seventh grade and senior year. Talk to your doctor or clinic to catch them up.

Itasca County Public Health offers free vaccines to those eligible. These clinics are held on the first Thursday of the month with an additional clinic on September 22nd to facilitate back to school immunizations for children in need. Call Itasca County Public Health at 218-327-2941 to see if your child is eligible for free vaccines and to ensure they are ready for the upcoming school year.

In addition to routine vaccinations, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) now recommends COVID-19 vaccines for everyone ages six months and older, and boosters for everyone ages five years and older, if eligible. Vaccines remain widely available through clinics and pharmacies in Itasca County and health care providers are prepared to assist parents in navigating available choices.

For area schools and early childhood care and education facilities, CDC COVID-related guidelines are lighter due to higher levels of vaccination and immunity. Distancing, isolation, proactive testing, and masking requirements are significantly lightened in recent guidance, with increasing layers of protection recommended if transmission increases to high levels. Minnesota Department of Health is in the process of updating its recommendations as well.

The current 14-day rate of spread in Itasca County is estimated at 38.8 cases per 10,000 residents (does not include positives identified only through at-home testing). Along with rates of community transmission, CDC considers current levels of hospital capacity to determine that Itasca residents are currently at medium risk from COVID.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, in general, people who have symptoms of respiratory or gastrointestinal infections, such as cough, fever, sore throat, vomiting, or diarrhea, should stay home. Testing is recommended for people with symptoms of COVID-19 (fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea) as soon as possible after symptoms begin. People who are at risk for getting very sick with COVID-19 who test positive should consult with a healthcare provider right away for possible treatment, even if their symptoms are mild. Details on when and how long to isolate, what to do if you were exposed to COVID, etc. can be found at www.cdc.gov.

Itasca residents with questions or concerns may leave them on the Itasca County COVID message line at 218-327-6784.

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