



ITASCA COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

ITASCA RESOURCE CENTER

1209 SE 2nd Avenue, Grand Rapids, Minnesota 55744-3983

Hearing Impaired Number TDD: 218-327-5549

(218) 327-2941

Visit us at: www.co.itasca.mn.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GETTING BACK TO HEALTHY ROUTINES WILL HELP ITASCA COUNTY INCREASE RESILIENCE

(Grand Rapids, Minn., May 20, 2020) – Itasca area laboratory confirmed cases of COVID-19 have increased by one since Tuesday, with no additional deaths, said Kelly Chandler, Itasca County Public Health department manager. As of noon Thursday, May 20, Itasca County has recorded 51 cases across age ranges and 6 deaths attributed to the virus.

“Efforts our residents and visitors are making to keep physical distance, to mask, and stay healthy will allow us to continue to open the community,” said Chandler. “As Governor Walz said on May 19, the state will be tracking how health is impacted by various stages of opening. The more conscious we are, the more we will be able to do.”

As of June 1, a series of steps will begin to further open the state and the economy. The [Minnesota Stay Safe Plan](#) expands to Phase 2 on June 1, including:

- Restaurant outdoor patios and serving areas may open, although limited to 50 patrons at a time who are encouraged to wear masks and must make reservations.
- [Campgrounds](#) and [charter/launch](#) boats around the state can open, with restrictions.
- Salons will be allowed to operate at 25% capacity, with stylists and customers wearing masks.
- Youth day camps are now allowed to proceed along with youth sports practices of less than 10 participants, but games are not yet permitted.

The Phase 1 reopening allowed elective health and medical procedures as of May 11, including dental and orthodontics. Emergency procedures had previously been allowed. To reopen, each facility must have a detailed COVID-19 response plan, according to the Minnesota Board of Dentistry.



“Oral health is important for our overall health,” said Chandler. “It’s good that we are getting back on track with our routines. I’m amazed by the connections between mouth pain and things like absenteeism from school. Also, connections between oral infections and diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and low-birth weight babies.”

Itasca County’s Emergency Operations Center has convened facilities and experts from across the county to prepare for and address COVID-related emergencies. The network of more than 100 organizations has met weekly since March, bringing current the pandemic preparedness plan that had been in place and practiced over years.

One example of the value of this network is the relationship between local clinics and hospitals and dental providers.

“We are thankful that our local dental providers are resuming care of patients, in a safe manner of course,” said Dr. Dan Soular, vice president of medical affairs and family physician, Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital. “We certainly appreciate that they have continued to care for patients needing emergency dental care through this COVID crisis, but we know that preventive care is also very important, as it is in medicine as a whole. As the entry point to your digestive and respiratory systems, the health of your mouth has a significant effect on your overall health.

“Since the start of COVID, we’ve appreciated the partnerships of our local dental providers in pulling together an on-call process to serve patients in need of urgent or emergent dental care. In turn, we are happy to support many of the local dental providers by providing fit testing of personal protective equipment for their staff and, as well, COVID-19 testing for their patients who are undergoing procedures. This ensures that their staff have the proper protection needed to care for their patients.

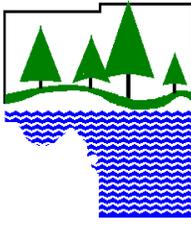
“One thing that is very clear about this crisis is that every part of our community is being impacted. We see the whole county coming together, from Deer River to Nashauk, S. Lake to Grand Rapids, to share supplies and knowledge,” said Chandler. “We are taking care of each other, reinforcing relationships that will leave us stronger on the other side of this.”

Itasca County’s enhanced Call Center now provides live staffing Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at 218-327-6784 for those with COVID-related issues and needs.

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Helpful link: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/dental/art-20047475>

Note to media: Itasca County Health Department will host 30-minute press briefings on Fridays at 10:00 a.m. as needed. Recordings available. Contact anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us for more information.



Media Contacts

Please contact each organization individually or Itasca County staff:
Kelly Chandler (218-327-6144 and Kelly.chandler@co.itasca.mn.us) or
Anna Anttila (anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us)