



# ITASCA COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

## ITASCA RESOURCE CENTER

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Visit us at: [www.co.itasca.mn.us](http://www.co.itasca.mn.us)

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

### TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS ALSO IMPACTED BY COVID AS ITASCA CASES AND DEATHS RISE

(Grand Rapids, Minn., May 26, 2020) – Laboratory confirmed COVID-related cases and deaths in Itasca County continue to rise, according to Itasca County Public Health and the Minnesota Department of Health. Confirmed cases as of noon Tuesday, May 26, stood at 53. Seven residents have died of COVID-related causes (one male in his 90s, four males in their 80s, one female in her 70s and one male in his 60s).

“It’s good to see Itasca County, like other communities, reopening with more social and economic activity,” said Kelly Chandler, department manager for Itasca County Public Health. “With every person doing their part to keep spread of the virus under control, this can work.”

“Itasca County also has seen its share of tragedy with this virus. We have friends and neighbors—from teenagers to elders—very, very sick. And families grieving for loved ones lost. Many of us are living with fear of the unknown. It’s up to us to do the right things, to assure others we care by following precautions. We won’t see a return to anything like normal until we see our disease numbers trend downward and our hospitalizations and ICU bed use turn downward.”

One normal activity this time of year is the beginning of summer breaks. Itasca area schools mark the official end of the school year in the next 10 days, with graduations beginning this week.

“We recognize this is a time for celebration, particularly for high school seniors,” said Chandler. “We support you in all that your futures hold. With that in mind, COVID-19 does transmit, and you don’t have to be experiencing symptoms in order to make friends, family and others in the community sick.”

“We can do this. We can enjoy our milestones *and* keep safety in mind. Gatherings of no more than 10 persons, keep six feet apart, wear masks when you’re closer than that (especially indoors), wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer. And if you’re not feeling well, take care of yourself and others by celebrating from home.”



“If you suspect you have been exposed to someone who is sick with COVID-19, please contact your clinic to determine if you should be tested.”

All area medical facilities have ramped up preparations for the pandemic, sourcing safety materials for their staff, securing and conducting tests, and building Intensive Care Unit capacity. Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital has conducted more than 1,000 tests and has seen all ages testing positive for COVID-19. Symptoms are similar for kids and adults, though younger people tend to have milder symptoms. Symptoms in children include fever, runny nose, cough, much like a cold.

According to Dr. Patty Carlin-Janssen, Itasca County Public Health Medical Director and Family Medicine Physician at Grand Itasca, “While we understand that the risk of serious illness is relatively low for teenagers who contract COVID-19, there may be some who become seriously ill if they are infected. Young people are more likely to be asymptomatic carriers and spread the disease to others in the community or their family members with whom they come in contact.

Dr. Carlin-Janssen agreed with Chandler. “It’s best for all age groups to continue to follow the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Minnesota Department of Health by not gathering in large groups, and when you must be within six feet of others, be sure to wear masks to protect those around you,” she said.

“We know, from our research and our experiences, that Itasca area teenagers mostly are making good choices,” said Nick Adams, Rapids Rising planning and implementation grant coordinator. “This crisis is no different. I see our communities’ young adults taking precautions, taking care of each other, in small and big ways. Every day. In many ways, our young people are carrying the pressures and stresses of adults, with far fewer resources. We will get through this together.”

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 resources:

Rapids Rising research: <https://www.rapidsrising.com/newsroom>

Johns Hopkins Medical Center information on young adults and coronavirus:

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-covid-19-younger-adults-are-at-risk-too>

*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](mailto:anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us) for more information.*

#### Media Contacts

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