



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

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

PATIENCE ASKED OF ITASCA RESIDENTS AS VACCINATIONS MOVE THROUGH  
PRIORITIZED PHASES

(Grand Rapids, Minn., **Jan. 12, 2021**) – COVID-19 vaccinations continue to move through Itasca County in phases. Hospital staff and EMS (ambulances, law enforcement and fire) are nearly complete and skilled nursing facilities will be done this week by pharmacies. Local assisted living facilities also will begin receiving vaccinations this week by Itasca County Public Health and pharmacies. Itasca County providers currently have enough vaccines to begin the next priority group, 1a, Tier 3 (healthcare providers not affiliated with larger healthcare systems).

Quantities of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines received by hospitals, pharmacies and in public health are specific to the priority group being vaccinated. Priorities for initial vaccinations were established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and guided by Minnesota’s COVID-19 vaccine advisory group.

Those who are elderly and those who have health conditions making them particularly susceptible to COVID will be part of an upcoming priority group. They will receive notifications from primary health providers when it is their turn.

Vaccinations for anyone who would like to be vaccinated is several weeks away and will be communicated through health care providers and public announcements.

According to Minnesota Department of Health, “The remedy for this pandemic is close, but we cannot get access to it as fast as we want, so we have to take this phased approach and try to focus initial doses where we’ll have the greatest impact on health. Vaccine is constantly being made and distributed. Everyone’s opportunity to get vaccinated will come; it will just take some time.”

“We so appreciate the patience of our community members,” said Kelly Chandler, Itasca County Public Health division manager. “Know that you will receive information when it is your turn for vaccinations. We do not have exact timelines for release of vaccinations. Eventually, we will have enough for everyone who would like a vaccination. It will take a few weeks and months to reach this point.

“Demand for COVID-19 vaccinations is very high—and that’s great! The best thing to do right now is to be sure you have an established relationship with a primary care physician and that



you are enrolled in the online communications system of your provider, like myChart or myHealth. Many of our local facilities are being overwhelmed by phone calls about vaccines, which makes it difficult for those with health issues to get through. We ask for residents to give this some time; you will not be missed!”

Spread of coronavirus slowed its drop in Itasca over the past several days, with the first increases in recent weeks. As of Jan. 11, sixty Itasca County residents are newly diagnosed and 103 over the past 14 days. As of Jan. 8, the county’s 14-day rate per 10,000 residents bumped up to 25 from a low of 23 late last week. These numbers cover weeks including Christmas and New Year’s holidays.

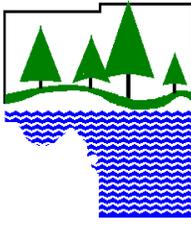
Two additional Itasca County women in their 70s recently passed away due to COVID, bringing the county’s total to 44.

“We are so close to widespread vaccination, but it’s going to take time. It is essential that we keep our guards up, wear our masks, keep our physical distance and still avoid gathering,” said Chandler. “The heartbreak continues to be real. Loved ones still are getting very sick, and if we lose our focus we could be facing the kinds of disastrous spreads other regions are seeing. Please stay strong, Itasca!”

Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital is hosting a community question and answer session on Wednesday, Jan. 13, 3:30-4:30 p.m. To join via ZOOM: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83594419406> (direct link available at [granditasca.org](http://granditasca.org) and the Grand Itasca Facebook page) or by phone: 312.626.6799, meeting ID: 835 9441 9406

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 – Friday. The Itasca COVID line number is 218-327-6784. Current local data and information also can be found at the county’s website here: <https://www.co.itasca.mn.us/798/COVID-19-Coronavirus-Information>

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**PHOTO CAPTION** (above): Itasca County Sheriff Vic Williams is among the region’s emergency responders who have received first doses of COVID-19 vaccinations.

*Media briefing: Itasca County Health Department will host 30-minute press briefings on Thursdays at 10:00 a.m. as needed. The next scheduled briefing will be Jan. 21.*

Itasca County Public Health media contacts

Kelly Chandler (218-327-6144 and [kelly.chandler@co.itasca.mn.us](mailto:kelly.chandler@co.itasca.mn.us)) or Anna Anttila ([anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us](mailto:anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us)).