
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



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KENT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT, HOSPITALS CONTINUE PLEA TO STAY HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Residents are encouraged to avoid traveling and gathering outside of their immediate household

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (December 14, 2020) – The Kent County Health Department and area hospitals are continuing to urge residents to stay home for the upcoming December holidays. As it stands today, Kent County has surpassed 35,800 total cases with a 14.7 percent positivity rate in the last seven days.

“We are making progress, but need to work together to continue to reduce the positivity rate and to reduce the spread and the strain on our hospitals and health care workers,” said Darryl Elmouchi, MD, president of Spectrum Health West Michigan. “We will continue to move this in the right direction by not traveling or gathering with people outside our immediate family.”

While it may be difficult to miss traditional holiday celebrations, the Kent County Health Department is stressing the importance of staying home and avoiding any kind of travel and group gatherings in order to avoid an even more devastating spike after the new year. Kent County is seeing more than 500 new coronavirus cases each day. The volume of cases has put a significant strain on local hospitals and frontline healthcare providers, and it has made it impossible for public health investigators and contact tracers to effectively do their jobs. This exacerbates the risk of community spread because some people may not know they need to quarantine.

“Residents helped a lot by celebrating Thanksgiving with only people inside of their immediate households,” said Hyung Kim, MD, president of Mercy Health Saint Mary’s. “Since infection rates, hospitalizations and mortality are still high, I hope people will stay strong in the upcoming holidays and avoid gathering with people outside their immediate households. We are far from being in the clear from COVID.”

The comprehensive “I love you so” holiday advertising campaign, which the health department and hospital partners launched in November, will extend to encompass all holidays through the end of the year. The message builds on the sentiment, “I love you SO I’m staying home,” acknowledging the desire to be with loved ones over the holidays but also to protect them from the spread of the coronavirus. Area residents will continue to see this messaging on local TV and radio stations, cable networks and print and digital platforms. [Click here](#) to view the video.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.