
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kent County Health Department Deeply Concerned about Rising COVID-19 Cases

Residents Encouraged to Get Vaccinated and Take Other Measures to Slow the Spread of the Virus

GRAND RAPIDS, MI. (Monday, Nov. 23, 2021) – The Kent County Health Department (KCHD) is urging residents to do their part to slow the spread of COVID-19. The current Kent County COVID-19 statistics are alarming and higher than at any previous point in the pandemic:

- The current test positivity rate is 22.8 percent,
- The 7-day average for new cases is 645, and
- Local hospitals and ICU's are operating at extremely high capacity.

“This is a crisis for all of us who live and work in Kent County,” said Dr. Adam London, KCHD Director. “The capacity for hospitals to provide care, which is exasperated by staffing shortages, is at a tipping point. We should all expect increased wait times for emergency, urgent, and primary care as well as delays in ambulance transfers and some surgical procedures until we control the spread of COVID-19 in the community.”

As we enter into the holiday season, the KCHD is asking residents to do everything in their power to help slow the rate of transmission, preserve access to an already strained health care system, and protect the most vulnerable in our community.

- **Get vaccinated against COVID-19 and Influenza.** Vaccines are widely available, safe, and effective. According to our local hospital leaders, most of the individuals who are currently hospitalized with COVID-19 are unvaccinated. If more people get vaccinated, it will greatly help reduce the number of COVID-19 patients in our hospitals. We also strongly urge residents to get the influenza vaccine. If you have questions about the vaccines, talk to your health care provider and visit vaccinatewestmi.com to find a location for a COVID-19, booster, or influenza vaccine location.

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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.

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- **Wear your mask in public settings.** While masks are not perfect, they provide an additional layer of protection by reducing the spread of virus laden droplets in exhaled air. Masks are especially important for people who are not vaccinated, not fully vaccinated, may be infected and do not have symptoms, or have health conditions that make them more vulnerable to becoming sick if they are infected with COVID-19. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services issued a mask advisory for the holiday season. Click [here](#) to read the advisory.
- **Get tested.** To help mitigate the spread of the virus, it is important to get tested:
 - if you have been around someone who has COVID-19,
 - experiencing any symptom of COVID-19,
 - before attending indoor gatherings with people above the age of 65 or with underlying health conditions.

If you have been around someone with COVID-19, get tested five days after exposure. It can be difficult to determine if it is a cold, flu or COVID. If you are experiencing symptoms, the KCHD encourages residents to err on the side of caution and get tested. After you get tested, stay home and away from others until you receive the results. [Click here](#) to review the symptoms of COVID-19 and [click here](#) for testing locations.

- **Take Preventative Measures.** Avoid large indoor gathering spaces as much as possible, use good hand hygiene, practice physical distancing, and cover coughs and sneezes. Eating well, getting enough sleep, and staying active can also help you stay healthy. All these measures will help slow the spread of the virus. Find more information about these practices [here](#).

We also encourage everyone to think carefully how you choose to celebrate with friends and family. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers additional tips for gathering and travel. You can learn more [here](#).

“I am thankful to everyone who has been following our recommendations since the onset of the pandemic,” concluded London. “The current problems would be far worse if not for your actions. We are now asking for your consideration once again as we look to slow the spread of the virus, regain access to our hospitals, and continue to work to get this pandemic behind us.”

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