

District Health Department No. 4

For Immediate Release

Date: April 5, 2021

COVID-19 Variant Identified in Presque Isle County District Health Department No 4 Reminds all to Continue COVID-19 Precautions

District Health Department No. 4 has been notified of a confirmed case of the COVID-19 variant B.1.1.7 in Presque Isle County. The individual completed isolation. The case was identified through routine active surveillance by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

In earlier surges, children — especially younger children — played only minor roles in transmitting the infection. When they were diagnosed with COVID-19, their symptoms tended to be mild or even absent, and for reasons that aren't well understood, they haven't usually been the first cases in households or clusters. The B.1.1.7 variant spreads more easily and is believed to be more contagious. Now, as more coronavirus variants have begun to dominate, and seniors gain protection from vaccines, that pattern may be changing.

The dramatic rise in new cases seems to be driven by greater circulation of more contagious variants, just as children and teens have returned to in-person activities like sports, parties, and classes. Cases are rising among all age groups, but one of the largest number of new COVID-19 cases is among children ages 10-19, the first time that's happened since the start of the pandemic.

Over the past month, incidence in this age group has more than doubled in the state. Cases among younger children — infants through 9-year-olds — are also going up, increasing by more than 230% since Feb. 19, according to data from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

“Since the variant is more contagious, the virus could potentially infect more people with less exposure”, said Dr. Joshua Meyerson, DHD4 Medical Director. “Which is why it is imperative our community strengthen prevention measures by wearing masks, physically distancing, avoiding crowds, washing hands frequently and getting vaccinated. As of today, anyone 16 and over is eligible for the COVID 19 vaccine. It is now YOUR TURN to get the vaccine. With cases soaring in Michigan right now and new variants taking hold, getting the vaccination is imperative to slowing and ending the pandemic.”

Based on available evidence, current tests and vaccines for COVID-19 also work against this new variant. Protective actions that prevent the spread of COVID-19 will also prevent the spread of the new variant B.1.1.7:

- Wear a mask covering mouth and nose around others
- Keep at least 6 feet apart from others
- Wash hands frequently
- Avoid crowded areas or indoor gatherings
- Ventilate indoor spaces if around others
- Seek testing if ill, exposed, or after travel
- Follow [isolation](#) or [quarantine](#) guidance if ill, exposed, or waiting on test results
- Get vaccinated when vaccine becomes available to you

DHD4 has a Pfizer wait list for those 16 & 17 years older at www.dhd4.org/covid19vaccine.

DHD4 has Moderna COVID-19 vaccination clinics scheduled this week in which no appointment is needed:

- Wednesday April 7th the Knights of Columbus Hall in Cheboygan has 450 walk-in spots available from 9:00-5:30 pm.
- Thursday, April 8th the Alpena Mall has 300 walk-in spots from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- Friday, April 9 St. Frances Church in Lewiston has 300 walk-in spots available from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

This is a rapidly evolving situation. Further updates will be shared with the media and on www.dhd4.org/covid19 and on facebook.

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