

District Health Department No. 4

For Immediate Release
Date: January 6, 2022



COVID-19 Omicron Variant Identified in Alpena County

District Health Department No. 4 (DHD4) has been notified by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) of an unvaccinated male in his 20's identified with the Omicron variant (B.1.1.529) of COVID-19 in Alpena County.

According to the MDHHS notification, "MDHHS is no longer providing routine notification of Omicron variants as we now anticipate a rapid replacement of the Delta variant by Omicron (B.1.1.529). Nevertheless, this is the first official detection of the Omicron within the DHD4 jurisdiction and Region 7."

The Omicron variant was first identified as a Variant of Concern by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on November 30, 2021. Today, the omicron variant is now considered the dominant strain in the United States, accounting for more than 70% of new cases, federal health officials estimate. Omicron is more easily spread than previous strains of COVID-19, including the Delta variant. Only a percentage of COVID-19 positive test samples are sent on for genetic sequencing – used identify the Omicron variant. Therefore, it is likely that there are more unidentified cases of the Omicron variant in Northeast Michigan.

“Preliminary information indicates that while currently available vaccinations may be less effective at preventing the transmission of the Omicron variant, they are still useful for preventing serious illness,” said Dr. Joshua Meyerson, DHD4 Medical Director. “Research has shown that some of the best ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 include mask-wearing while in public, maintaining six feet of social distancing whenever possible, and frequent handwashing. Doing these things in conjunction with getting vaccinated, either for the first time or as a booster dose, is the best way to protect yourself and your family from COVID-19.”

In addition to getting vaccinated and wearing masks – particularly indoors and in crowded areas – other things people can do to protect themselves and their loved ones include:

- Getting tested for COVID-19, especially before gatherings.
- Self-isolating until you recover if you develop symptoms or test positive for COVID-19.
- Physically distancing from others and avoiding crowds.
- Washing hands frequently with soap and water and cleaning hands with alcohol-based hand rub.
- Covering your mouth and nose with a bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Getting a booster dose of a COVID-19 vaccination when you are eligible to do so.

For a list of vaccine providers and locations in Alpena, Cheboygan, Montmorency and Presque Isle counties, visit www.dhd4.org/covid19. To schedule an appointment with the DHD4 call 1-800-221-0294.

If you have quarantine or isolation timeframe questions, please use DHD4's easy calculator to know when to end isolation or quarantine. It can be found at www.dhd4.org/covid19.

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For all media requests, please go to www.dhd4.org and complete the media request form. Thank you.

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