

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

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l.johnson@nwhealth.orgwww.nwhealth.org**July 22, 2021****Health Department of Northwest Michigan COVID-19 Update****Delta variant spreading across Michigan;
health officials urge all residents to get vaccinated**

The Delta variant – a much more transmissible strain of COVID-19 – has been identified in several counties across Michigan and health officials are urging those who are not vaccinated to get the shot or take precautions to prevent the strain from rapidly spreading across our communities.

“The best protection against this strain is vaccination for yourself and those around you,” said Dr. Josh Meyerson, Medical Director for the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. “I anticipate that it (Delta variant) will become the prevalent strain in our area as it has in the rest of the country. Although not identified in our four-county jurisdiction of the health department, I expect and assume that it is present at this time based on our increasing case rates and the presence of the Delta strain in surrounding communities over the past two weeks,” he added.

The B.1.717.2 variant – also known as the Delta variant - has been labelled a variant of concern as it is much more transmissible and is expected to become the most prevalent strain as it continues to spread more rapidly than previous strains. Although COVID-19 cases are currently low, community-based transmission is still present and health officials expect continued cases to occur with the potential for rapid spread and outbreaks, especially in unvaccinated cohorts.

Persons with symptoms are encouraged to get tested promptly, isolate from others until test results are known, and those exposed should quarantine promptly even if they are not ill. And, the single best way to reduce the potential spread is to continue to promote vaccination with any of the approved COVID-19 vaccines. Based on available evidence, the vaccines for COVID-19 also work against this new variant.

It is normal for a virus to mutate and develop variant strains, and the more opportunity the COVID-19 virus has to circulate in a community, the more transmittable it is and can cause more serious disease. “This is why widespread community vaccination is critical,” Dr. Meyerson said. “We are already seeing increased cases and hospitalizations from the Delta variant, and we don’t want this trend to continue and cause large numbers of illnesses, hospitalizations and deaths.”

The COVID-19 vaccines – Pfizer, Moderna and J&J – appear to be highly protective against the Delta variant, so the most effective protection is to get vaccinated. However, the vaccine is not 100% effective so we should all continue to take precautions based on our personal risk of severe illness and the risks inherent in our activities. At this time, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan is urging individuals to continue to take precautions against COVID-19, especially as new variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 continue to become more prevalent. These important precautions include:

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, visit nwhealth.org.

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- Get vaccinated for COVID-19 when available and eligible. For the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, this means receiving both doses for the vaccine to be fully effective.
- Wear a mask around others if not vaccinated.
- Stay six feet apart from others if not vaccinated.
- Wash hands often.
- Ventilate indoor spaces.
- Seek testing if ill, exposed, or after travel.
- Follow isolation or quarantine guidance if ill, exposed, or waiting on test results.

The health department offers convenient COVID-19 vaccination clinics for all area residents and visitors 12 and older either by appointment ahead of time or simply walking in. Parent consent is required for minors. Anyone may call 800-432-4121 if they have questions or are not able to find a time or date that works for them and/or their child. Clinics offer client choice of Pfizer, Moderna or J&J unless otherwise noted. Upcoming clinics include:

Friday, July 23

- 8:30-10:30 a.m. - Elk Rapids Farmers Market, 305 US-31, Elk Rapids. Vaccine: Pfizer or J&J. To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)
- 6-8 p.m. - Venetian Festival, Bridge St., Charlevoix. Vaccine: Pfizer or J&J. To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)

Saturday, July 24

- 11 a.m.- 1 p.m. - Northern Michigan Antique Flywheelers, 145 US-131, Boyne Falls. Vaccine: Pfizer or J&J. To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)

Wednesday, July 28

- 8:15-11:30 a.m., Health Department of Northwest Michigan, 220 W. Garfield Ave., Charlevoix. Vaccine: Pfizer, Moderna or J&J. To schedule an appointment, [Click Here](#)
- 1-4:25 p.m. - Health Department of Northwest Michigan, 3434 M-119, Harbor Springs. Vaccine: Pfizer, Moderna and J&J. To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)

Thursday, July 29

- 12-1 p.m. - First Presbyterian Church, 501 E. Mitchell St., Petoskey. Vaccine: Pfizer and J&J. To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)
- 1-4:25 p.m. - Health Department of Northwest Michigan, 5 Livingston Blvd., Gaylord. Vaccine: Pfizer, Moderna and J&J. To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)
- 2:30-4 p.m. - Little Traverse Historical Museum, 100 Depot Ct., Petoskey. Vaccine Pfizer and J&J. To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)

Friday, July 30

- 1-4:25 p.m. - Health Department of Northwest Michigan, 209 Portage Dr., Bellaire. Vaccine: Pfizer, Moderna and J&J. To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)
- 2:30-4:30 p.m. - Whippy Dip, 10946 County Hwy 48, Vanderbilt. Vaccine: Pfizer and J&J. To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)

The calendar on the website www.nwhealth.org lists clinics currently scheduled through August 12.

Stay up to date on the latest information in the Health Department of Northwest Michigan jurisdiction by [liking and following our Facebook page](#) and visiting our [COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#). To locate a testing facility, visit the [Michigan COVID-19 Test Finder website](#). To track the risk levels of COVID-19 pandemic indicators, visit the [MI Safe Start Map website](#). For more information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, visit the MDHHS [vaccine website](#) or the [CDC vaccine website](#).