

Main Office  
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## PRESS RELEASE

TO: Marquette County Media

FROM: Marquette County Health Department

CONTACT: Patrick L. Jacuzzo, Director of Environmental Health, 906-475-9977

DATE: July 24, 2020

SUBJECT: **COVID-19 Infections Accelerating in the U.P.**

The Health Officers and Medical Directors of the six health departments in the Upper Peninsula are reaching out to U.P. residents to inform them that in the past few weeks, the Upper Peninsula has seen a dramatic increase in positive cases of COVID-19. The region has gone from being considered “low risk” for infection to “medium-risk” and moving towards “high risk.” Infection rates have increased from 2 to 4 cases per million population per day to 32 through today for the U.P. overall. The counties bordering Wisconsin have been especially hit hard seeing an average of 74 cases per million population per day with Gogebic at 123 cases per million population and Menominee County at 84 as of July 21, 2020.

Multiple factors have contributed to the sudden rise in cases, including an influx of people from outside the area who have brought the virus with them. Our mobility has also increased. Data collected on cellphone movement indicates that Upper Peninsula residents have increased mobility more than those in the Lower Peninsula. This may account for why people in the Upper Peninsula, who test positive for COVID-19, are reporting more close contacts than those testing positive in the Lower Peninsula. Upper Peninsula residents have been lulled into a false sense of security because our region was “low risk” until just recently. It seems that many people are being less cautious by ignoring six foot distancing and not wearing a mask in public.

COVID-19 is here and spreading. It is anticipated that infections may continue to rise. Soon, accelerated growth of infection with the virus may be evident. It is equally, if not more, important now than it was in April and May to limit travel (locally and distant), reduce the number of people encountered, maintain physical distancing, and to wear a mask in public. Likewise, individuals at higher risk (e.g. older adults, underlying medical conditions, obesity, immune compromised, live in congregate setting) must be particularly vigilant about these measures to reduce the spread of this virus.

As always:

- Clean your hands often. Scrub with soap for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer if you cannot wash.
- Avoid close contact with people, particularly those who appear sick.

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- Stay home when you are sick. Call ahead before going to your healthcare provider. Learn what to do if you are sick; <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Wear a mask. It ultimately protects us all.
- Maintain a 6-foot distance between yourself and people who are not members of your household.

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