



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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**NEWS RELEASE FOR
IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
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Kalamazoo County Updated COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations

KALAMAZOO, MI – On July 27, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated their recommendation for mask wearing. To maximize protection from the Delta variant and prevent the spread of COVID-19 to others, the CDC recommends everyone – including fully vaccinated individuals – wear a mask indoors in public if in an area of substantial or high transmission. In addition, given new evidence, the CDC is also recommending indoor face masks for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status, indicating that children should return to full-time in-person learning in the fall with layered prevention strategies. Indoor masking for all in K-12 schools aims to reduce transmission of COVID-19, prevent student and employee absenteeism due to illness, and promote a healthy, in-person learning environment.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department fully support and endorse the new CDC recommendations.

Kalamazoo County is now classified at the substantial community transmission level with a case rate of 55.5 per 100,000 persons (Time frame: July 26-Aug 01) and a test positivity rate of 7% (Time frame: July 24-July 30). Neighboring counties have also met the substantial or high transmission threshold.

Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department recommends face mask wearing for all individuals – fully vaccinated and unvaccinated – while indoors in public. Given the community transmission status change, the health department also encourages schools and businesses to consider the latest public health recommendations when determining risk mitigation strategies for employees and clients within buildings.

A layered protection strategy should be followed to ensure a healthy environment, allowing all Kalamazoo County residents the best chance to remain healthy and physically present at work and in the classroom setting. Such strategy should include the following risk mitigation measures:

- Receive the COVID-19 vaccine, if eligible
- Wear your face mask while indoors

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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- Wash your hands frequently
- Maintain a distance of six feet from others
- Enhance ventilation systems within buildings
- Stay home when sick and get tested for COVID-19
- Adhere to isolation if you test positive for COVID-19 or quarantine if considered a close contact

“The Delta variant of COVID-19 is highly contagious and increases the risk of illness and outbreaks. That is why a layered protection strategy is once again needed to help stop the spread of the virus. Vaccination remains the best tool in our toolbox to prevent COVID-19 infection, severe disease, hospitalization, and death. However, adding back in another tool, like wearing your face mask while indoors, will help ensure everyone is doing their part to protect our community against the Delta variant,” said Jim Rutherford, Health Officer.

To date, 62.7% of Kalamazoo County residents 12+ years and older have received at least one dose of vaccine. The health department offers COVID-19 vaccines located at 311 E. Alcott Street, Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. There is no cost to individuals for vaccination, no ID is required, and no appointment is needed. You will be able to select which vaccine brand you would like to receive: Pfizer, Moderna, or Johnson & Johnson.

“We understand the frustration brought on by the length of the pandemic and with the changing recommendations. As more is learned about the virus and the new variants, we must change our recommendations accordingly. We know that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe, effective, and the best defense against the virus. We encourage county and community leaders, businesses, and schools to join us in urging all residents to get vaccinated,” said Rutherford.

For more information about COVID-19, visit www.kalcounty.com/covid19 or call 269-373-5200.

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