



BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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For Immediate Release

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Berrien County Health Department Provides Updated COVID-19 Prevention Recommendations Vaccination, face masks recommended to slow the spread of COVID-19

(Benton Harbor, MI) --- Over the past few weeks, Berrien County, like other counties across the state of Michigan, has experienced a rise in COVID-19 cases and transmission. According to state and local data, Berrien County is now classified at the [substantial community transmission level](#) with a case rate of 84.7 per 100,000 persons (Time frame: Aug 03-Aug 10) and a test positivity rate of 7.9% (Time frame: Aug 03-Aug 10). If current trends continue, these rates are anticipated to further increase in the coming weeks.

Aligning with updated guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and the [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services \(MDHHS\)](#), Berrien County Health Department also recommends that when the community is experiencing substantial and high transmission levels, everyone, including fully vaccinated individuals, wear a face mask in public indoor settings to help prevent spread of the Delta variant and protect others. Wearing a face mask is particularly important when attending indoor public gatherings and where social distancing is not able to be maintained. Given the community transmission status change, the health department also encourages businesses, community and faith based organizations and event organizers to consider the latest public health recommendations when determining risk mitigation strategies for employees, customers, community members and events.

These recommendations are based on [emerging science](#) showing the Delta variant to be highly infectious and able to spread at greater rates than any other strains of COVID-19. Research shows that the COVID-19 vaccines provide protection against the Delta variant and most people who experience a breakthrough infection after being fully vaccinated report mild or no symptoms, with an extremely low risk of hospitalization and death. Past infection with COVID-19 does not assure protection from the Delta variant, so people who have had past COVID-19 infection are still strongly encouraged to get vaccinated. High vaccination coverage will not only reduce the spread of the virus, but also help prevent new, and possibly more concerning, variants from emerging.

“When providing guidance and recommendations to our community about which COVID-19 mitigation measures may need to be in place, we are taking into consideration many local factors, such as the current rate of COVID-19 transmission, our health system's capacity, vaccination coverage, testing and which populations may be at risk,” said Courtney Davis, interim health officer, Berrien County Health Department. “The best way to protect yourself, your family, and your community from COVID-19 and the Delta variant is to get vaccinated.”

A layered protection strategy should be followed to ensure a healthy environment, allowing all Berrien 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
- Wash your hands frequently
- Maintain a distance of six feet from others
- 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

At this time, 54.7% of Berrien County residents over the age of 12 have initiated vaccination for COVID-19. [Vaccinations are available](#) through the Berrien County Health Department, Spectrum Health Lakeland, and many area pharmacies.

Find more information about COVID-19 case data and vaccination information at www.bchdmi.org/COVID19 or call 800.815.5485.

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