



Benzie County Office
6051 Frankfort Hwy, Ste 100
Benzonia, MI 49616

Phone: 231-882-4409
Fax: 231-882-0143

www.bldhd.org

Leelanau County Office
7401 E. Duck Lake Rd
Lake Leelanau, MI 49653

Phone: 231-256-0200
Fax: 231-882-0143

PERSONAL HEALTH DIVISION

For Immediate Release

March 1, 2022

CDC revises mask guidance for communities where hospitals seeing less strain on capacity

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced Friday it is relaxing its mask guidance for communities where hospitals are not under high strain of COVID-19 cases. Under the new guidance, nearly 70% of the U.S. population lives in an area [considered to be low or medium risk](#), and residents there are advised they can go indoors without masks.

The CDC recommends continued mask use in communities where serious cases of COVID-19 are straining the health system and of course for anyone who needs a higher level of protection for themselves or their family.

“As of Monday, February 28, all counties in our jurisdiction are at medium,” said Lisa Peacock, Health Officer for the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department, which includes the counties of Benzie and Leelanau. [“To determine the COVID-19 community level](#), the CDC looks at a combination of three metrics – new COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population in the past 7 days, the percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients, and total new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the past 7 days.”

According to the CDC, new COVID-19 admissions and the percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied represent the current potential strain on the health system. Data on new cases acts as an early warning indicator of potential increases in health system strain in the event of a COVID-19 surge. Using these data, the COVID-19 community level is classified as low, medium, or high. Currently, in the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department jurisdiction, Benzie and Leelanau counties are considered at “medium” risk. To check your county’s COVID-19 community level, [click here](#). The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services also recently released [updated guidance on masking](#) as well as an [updated summary of pandemic phases](#) indicating our state is currently in a phase of Recovery.

“The move to ease up on universal masking reflects current conditions at this phase of the coronavirus pandemic, including widespread immunity through vaccination and prior infection as well as better access to testing and treatments,” Peacock noted. “Regardless, there may be groups of people who want to or should continue wearing a mask, including anyone with underlying health conditions, those who live with someone with high risk factors, anyone who is immunocompromised, as well as those who just feel safer wearing a mask.” See the CDC [when and where to wear a mask or respirator](#).

The importance of being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 continues to be emphasized by health officials:

- [Get vaccinated and/or get your booster](#).
- [Get tested](#) if you are exposed to COVID-19 or feeling any symptoms.
- [Isolate and quarantine](#) if you are exposed.

The Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department continues to offer free COVID-19 Home Test and KN-95 masks at each of their locations. The home testing kits are available for the public in our offices, while supplies last. Each kit has 2 tests, and each person can take one kit as supplies are limited. The masks are available in packs of two, first come first served while supplies last, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. All offices are closed from 12-1 p.m. for lunch. Office locations include:

- Benzie Office, 6051 Frankfort Hwy, Benzonia, MI 49616
- Leelanau Office, 7401 E. Duck Lake Road, Lake Leelanau, MI 49653

The health department also offers convenient COVID-19 vaccination clinics for all area residents and visitors 5 years and older. Parent consent is required for minors. These clinics will be open to first, second, additional, and booster dose appointments and offers all three vaccines unless otherwise noted.

Upcoming clinics include:

Tuesday, March 8th

- BLDHD Leelanau Office, 7401 E. Duck Lake Road, Lake Leelanau, MI 49653
- Time: 8:00-12:00 and 1- 4:30pm
- Appointments required and Parent/guardian must accompany minor
- To schedule an appointment: [Click here](#)

Wednesday, March 9th

- BLDHD Benzie Office, 6051 Frankfort Hwy, Benzonia, MI 49616
- Time: 8:00-12:00 and 1- 4:30pm
- Appointments required and Parent/guardian must accompany minor
- To schedule an appointment: [Click here](#)

Anyone may call the BLDHD's Public Health Information Line at 231-882-2197 if they have questions or are not able to find a time or date that works for them and/or their child. Additional vaccination sites can be found at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov).

COVID-19 Testing

The health department is offering free COVID-19 testing with the support of HONU lab. The test is free, and no doctor's order is required. Pre-registration is not required, but it is recommended to reduce time spent at the testing clinic, and walk-ins are welcome. Testing is available:

Testing will be available as follows:

- Mondays and Thursdays, 10:00-3:00, VFW Post 7731, 7475 E Duck Lake Rd, Lake Leelanau, MI. To register for testing in Leelanau, [click here](#).
- Tuesdays and Fridays, 10:00–3:00, Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital, 224 Park Ave, Frankfort, MI 49635. The testing clinic is located in the trailer by the cardiac rehab entrance (lower-level parking lot). To register for testing in Benzie, [click here](#).

COVID-19 Case Counts

The Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department is reporting the following case information:

- On Wednesday, February 23, 6 new cases of COVID-19 were reported in Benzie (2) and Leelanau (4).
- On Thursday, February 24, 7 new cases of COVID-19 were reported in Benzie (4) and Leelanau (3).
- On Friday, February 25, 8 new cases of COVID-19 were reported in Benzie (3) and Leelanau (5).
- On Saturday, February 26, 1 new case of COVID-19 was reported in Leelanau (1).
- On Sunday, February 27, 1 new case of COVID-19 was reported in Benzie (1).
- On Monday, February 28, 2 new cases of COVID-19 were reported in Leelanau (2).
- Today, March 1, 5 new cases of COVID-19 were reported in Benzie (1) and Leelanau (4).

As of 4:00 p.m. today, the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department is reporting:

- Total COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Benzie– 3,341, Leelanau– 3,549
- Active COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Benzie– 187, Leelanau– 209
- Recovered COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Benzie– 3,098, Leelanau– 3,299
- Confirmed COVID-19 deaths in the following counties: Benzie – 56, Leelanau– 41

Media Contact:

Rachel Pomeroy, PIO

231-882-6085

RPomeroy@bldhd.org

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