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PERSONAL HEALTH DIVISION

For Immediate Release

July 22, 2021

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 Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department. “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 two-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, current tests and 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 Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department 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:

- 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.

Everyone is welcome at all health department clinics, including residents and non-residents. All three vaccines are available. Minors must be accompanied by a parent/legal guardian. Public health nurses are on site at these events and able to answer any questions about the vaccines. All clinics are open to walk-ins or an appointment can be scheduled by clicking on the clinic link below:

- **Tuesday, July 27th**
 - Suttons Bay Middle School Gymnasium, 310 S. Elm Street, Suttons Bay, MI 49682
 - Time: 10:00-12:00pm
 - Vaccine: Moderna, Janssen, and Pfizer (open to 12 or older, parent/guardian must accompany minor)
 - To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)
- **Wednesday, July 28th**
 - Crystal Cafe, 1681 Benzie Hwy, Benzonia, MI 49616
 - Time: 4:00- 6:00pm
 - Vaccine: Moderna, Janssen, and Pfizer (open to 12 or older, parent/guardian must accompany minor)
 - To schedule an appointment: [Click Here](#)

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

- Total COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Benzie– 1,262, Leelanau– 1,268
- Active COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Benzie– 3, Leelanau– 8
- Recovered COVID-19 cases in the following counties: Benzie– 1,225, Leelanau– 1,244
- Confirmed COVID-19 deaths in the following counties: Benzie – 34, Leelanau– 16
- Hospitalized: 161 total; 1 currently

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