

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Public Health Emergency COVID-19 Alert
Critically High COVID-19 Activity Levels – Celebrate Upcoming Holidays Safely

As COVID-19 cases continue to rise across the country and Wisconsin, the Northeast Region Public Health Officers are issuing a **Public Health Emergency COVID-19 Alert** to urge residents to follow good public health practices this holiday season. Public Health Officers stress that it is safest to celebrate Thanksgiving with the people in your immediate household and not risk gathering with others. Traveling, hosting guests indoors, and sharing food, utensils and plates all pose significant risks, they warn.

"The major difference right now is that COVID-19 cases are increasing in Northeast Wisconsin and we have reached a Critical level," explained Jayme Sopha, Chair of the Northeast Region's WI Association of Local Health Departments and Boards (WALHDAB). "There is an underlying risk for even small gatherings given our case burden rate and percent of positive tests."

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) has added a new level, "Critically High," to the burden indicator and activity level for COVID-19. Adding this new category will give Wisconsinites a better idea of how COVID-19 is impacting the state. All public health jurisdictions in the Northeast Region of Wisconsin have reached the Critically High level, with case burdens above 1,000 cases per 100,000 people.

Critically high levels of COVID-19 cases are resulting in increased COVID-19 related hospitalizations and deaths. Due to escalating cases, public health is not able to notify positive cases and their close contacts in a timely manner. This severely limits efforts to contain the virus. Public health implores everyone to take actions to stop uncontrolled community spread.

Further strategies from (DHS) for reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19 during the Thanksgiving holiday can be found [here](#). Additionally, Governor Evers signed [Executive Order #94](#), which advises Wisconsinites to stay home, urging them to take precautions to stay safe if they must leave their home, and encouraging businesses to take more steps to protect their customers, employees, and the community.

Everyday Practices to Stop the Spread

- Physically distance at least 6 feet from people with whom you do not live.
- Wear a cloth face mask, unless unable to wear one for medical reasons.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Indoors: do not gather with people outside of your household.
- Outdoors: limit gatherings to 10 people or fewer, physically distance and wear face coverings.
- If symptomatic, call your health care provider, [get a test](#), and stay home while awaiting results.
- Cooperate with public health officials if you have tested positive or are a close contact.

"It can be difficult suggesting changes to holiday traditions, so it is important to start these conversations early," said Sopha. "Remember that safer celebrations offer protection for the most vulnerable members of your family so you can all gather for years to come."

For more information on cases in your area and COVID-19 recommendations, visit your local health department's website.

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Issued by the following Local and Tribal Health Departments:

Counties of:

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Fond du Lac
Green Lake
Kewaunee
Manitowoc
Marinette
Marquette
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Outagamie
Shawano
Sheboygan
Waupaca
Waushara
Winnebago

Cities of:

Appleton
De Pere
Menasha

Tribal Nation:

Oneida Nation