
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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U.K. COVID-19 B.1.1.7 Confirmed in Kent County

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. (Feb. 7, 2021) The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) notified the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) that the COVID-19 variant known as SARS-CoV-2 B.1.1.7 has been confirmed in a Kent County resident.

This variant is concerning because it is associated with increased transmissibility. Compared to the original virus, the B.1.1.7 variant is approximately 50 percent more transmissible, leading to faster spread of the virus and potentially increasing numbers of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths.

The presence of the quick spreading variant in Kent County illustrates the importance of staying vigilant in the prevention of spreading COVID-19. Proper mask usage, social distancing and practicing good hand hygiene continue to be the most effective measures in combating the spread of the disease. The KCHD is also encouraging residents to limit their interactions with people who live outside of their own households.

“Fundamentally this is a race for the coverage of our population; a race that pits vaccination efforts against the transmission of infections,” says Dr. Adam London, KCHD Director. “While we work to minimize the impact of COVID-19 infections, the B.1.1.7 variant is giving the virus increased velocity.”

The KCHD is encouraging testing of individuals who have traveled out of Michigan in last 14 days, especially to areas in which the new variants are widely circulating.

The SARS-CoV-2 B.1.1.7 variant is thought to have emerged in the United Kingdom and has since been detected in many countries and states. The MDHHS has identified 30 cases of the B.1.1.7 variant in Michigan. While most of these cases have been found in the southeast portion of the state, the recent confirmation of a case in Kalamazoo and now in Kent counties illustrates the fast-moving nature of the variant.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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