

ALLEGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

3255 – 122nd Ave., Suite 200, Allegan, MI 49010

Office Administration

(269) 673-5411 Fax (269) 673-4172

Bioterrorism Preparedness

(269) 673-5411

Personal Health

(269) 673-5411



Communicable Disease

(269) 673-5411

Environmental Health

(269) 673-5415

Resource Recovery

(269) 673-5415

NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Lindsay Maunz, MPH, CHES, CPH

Public Information Officer

(269) 673-5411 | lmaunz@allegancounty.org

COVID-19 Variant B.1.1.7 Identified in Allegan County

(Allegan) – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) notified the Allegan County Health Department (ACHD) that the MDHHS Bureau of Laboratories identified the COVID-19 variant B.1.1.7 in an Allegan County resident. The confirmed case is middle aged and had no known travel history.

“When a variant is identified or suspected, additional measures take place, such as a strict 14-day quarantine,” Allegan County Medical Director Richard Tooker states. “A new variant in our community is concerning since it can be related to higher transmission rates. Continue to practice strong mitigation strategies including mask wearing, social distancing, hand washing and getting a vaccine as soon as it is available to you. These actions help slow the spread.”

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. This variant is concerning because it is associated with increased transmissibility. Compared to the wild-type 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. Therefore, additional levels of public health intervention are required once the variant has been identified. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention variant data, 5,567 B.1.1.7 cases are reported nationwide, with 616 of those from Michigan as of March 18, 2021.

With the high transmission rate of the B.1.1.7 variant, vaccination is more important than ever. People should get vaccinated as soon as it is offered to them. At this time, the COVID-19 vaccines appear to be effective against the variant.

Actions to protect yourself and others from the B.1.1.7 variant include:

- Getting vaccinated for COVID-19 as soon as it is available to you.
- Wearing a mask around others.
- Staying six feet apart from others.
- Washing hands often.
- Ventilating indoor spaces.

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COVID-19 testing (not antibody test) is available to individuals of any age, regardless of symptoms. There is a testing event this Saturday (March 20) **from 10:00am to 2:00pm at the Allegan County Transportation Building located at 750 Airway Dr, Allegan.** Individuals under the age of 18 will need parent/guardian consent. You do not have to bring a lab order to be tested. Anyone who is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, including fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, shortness of breath, or had recent travel history should seek testing as well as those working with the public, living in congregate living facilities or have potentially been exposed.

For more information, visit www.allegancounty.org/covid or www.michigan.gov/coronavirus.

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