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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Before Labor Day COVID-19 Cases and Test Positivity on the Rise in Whiteside County with 27% of Total Cases Identified in the Last 14 Days

September 4, 2020 – As we all prepare for Labor Day, the Whiteside County Health Department reminds everyone COVID-19 is on the rise in Whiteside County, throughout Illinois and Iowa. We urge EVERYONE to work together to protect one another from COVID-19 by physically distancing and masking around friends, family and strangers, staying home when you have symptoms of COVID-19, diligently washing your hands, and holding events and gatherings outdoors when possible.

In just the last 14 days (8/21 - 9/03) Whiteside County identified 158 (27%) of the 580 total cases. Additionally, during the month of August Whiteside County saw a rise in both cases and a 2.44% increase in our test positivity rate. Finally, with 18 new cases announced, August 31st became Whiteside's highest single total day.

Whiteside County saw an increase in cases among most age groups in August. While there were increases among those 60 and older, who are at highest risk for severe illness, the majority of new cases were among individuals in their 20s and their 50s. This reminds us all ages, and particularly those in their 20s and 50s, need to take steps to protect those around them.

Recently, Whiteside County has also seen a worrying increase in the number of individuals unable to help us identify who or where they were exposed through contact tracing. This reinforced the fact that COVID-19 is being spread by individuals with mild to no symptoms who may not realize they are sick. That is why we ask everyone to mask and physically distance when around others. This is essential if you are planning on getting together with friends and family or traveling this Labor Day weekend.

“Our recent increase in cases and positivity rate seems to indicate that while testing, isolation and quarantine is helping to control COVID-19, it alone is not enough. Successful intervention is going to require a multilayered approach from all of us,” said Cory Law Whiteside County Public Information Officer, “If you are not **actively working to slow the spread of COVID-19** through physically distancing and masking when around people you do not live with, staying home when you have COVID-19 symptoms, and frequently washing your hands, intentional or not, you are helping contribute to its spread in our community.”

The Whiteside County Health Department is relieved there has not been an increase in hospitalizations due to serious illness or deaths in our county. However, every new case increases time lost, the demand for PPE, and the chance someone vulnerable will be exposed. We do not want to see schools revert exclusively to remote learning or have additional restrictions, as in Region 4, imposed on businesses and events due to an increase in cases and positivity rate. To prevent this, we urge all residents and visitors to take simple protective actions.



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How to Protect Your Community

- Stay Home if you have any symptom associated with COVID-19 that cannot be explained by a previously diagnosed condition.
 - Symptoms may be milder early on in a person's infection, which is also when they are most infectious. Younger and/or healthier people tend to have milder symptoms, if they develop symptoms at all.
 - Any symptom should be a reason to stay home or at the very least be more careful around others.
- Physically Distance **and** Mask around friends, family and strangers you do not live with.
 - IDPH does not consider physically distancing a replacement for masking, nor masking a replacement for staying 6 feet away from others.
 - This includes when in public, at private events and even when visiting someone at their home or having guests at yours.
 - For those who cannot mask or physically distance, work to find other ways to reduce your exposure to others and their exposure to you.
 - Utilize outdoor spaces when available.
- Take advantage of low-contact options when possible.
 - Businesses and restaurants are working hard to protect you by implementing protective measures and alternative arrangements such as curbside pickup and delivery. Consider mixing these options into your routine, especially if you have been around a lot of different people recently.
 - Individuals who do not or cannot mask and physically distance and those at high risk for complications associated with COVID-19 should utilize these options more frequently.
- Reduce your chance of spreading COVID-19 by spreading out social or close-contact events.
 - COVID-19 is spread by close contact. Individuals can potentially spread the virus up to 2 days before they realize they are ill. Try to keep 2-3 days between gatherings, especially if there will be a lot of close contact or attendees.
 - Consider identifying a specific, small group of people and limit your contact to those in this group.
- Evaluate your surroundings. If you do not feel comfortable, try to find other options.
- Work with Public Health officials as they work to contact trace, isolate and quarantine.
- If you are at high risk for developing serious illness related to COVID-19, or live or work with someone at high risk, you may need to work harder to ensure you and those around you are following these recommendations.

If you have questions please contact the IDPH COVID-19 hotline at 1-800-889-3931 or reach out to us. Additional information is also available on the [Illinois's COVID-19](#) and [CDC COVID-19](#) websites.

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