



HEALTH DISTRICT

## Portage County Combined General Health District

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*Joseph Diorio, MPH, MS, RS, Health Commissioner*

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Thursday, September 17, 2020  
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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Portage County Becomes Risk Level 3/ Red on Ohio Public Health Advisory System**

Portage County Public Health was alerted Thursday afternoon that Portage County has moved from Risk Level 2/ Orange into Risk Level 3/ Red in the Ohio Public Health Advisory System. Portage County is Red for the first time since the alert system was implemented. The Level 3 Risk designation means that there is very high exposure and spread of COVID-19 in Portage County. Portage County residents are encouraged to limit activities as much as possible and to follow all current health orders.

Level 3 is reached when a county triggers 4-5 of the below indicators. The indicators triggered in Portage County are as follows:

- New cases per capita (63.4 cases per 100,000 residents in past 2 weeks)
- Sustained increase in new cases (5.6 average cases on 8/26 to 10.9 by 9/4)
- Proportion of cases not in a congregate setting
- Sustained increase in outpatient visits for COVID-like illness (6.3 average visits on 9/10 to 9.3 on 9/15)

Portage County is experiencing an increase in COVID-19 cases due to nearly three dozen cases linked to off-campus spread at Kent State University in off-campus settings.

Residents should follow the recommended guidelines for Risk Level 3 to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Conduct a daily health/symptom self-evaluation.
- Stay at home if symptomatic.
- Maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet from non-household members.
- Wear a face covering/mask.
- Consider necessary travel only.
- Follow good hygiene standards, including:
  - Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
  - Use hand sanitizer frequently.
  - Avoid touching your face.
  - Clean all high-touch surfaces often.
- Decrease in-person interactions with others.
- Limit attending gatherings of any number.
- Seek medical care as needed, but limit or avoid unnecessary visits to hospitals, nursing homes, and residential care facilities to see others as much as possible.

The Portage County Health District reminds the public that COVID-19 is a class A communicable disease that is spread person-to-person. “Knowing that Portage County has moved to red on the Public Health Advisory System, I would like to remind Portage County residents of the importance of taking extra precautions when participating in activities outside your home in order to reduce the amount of contact with the general public,” stated Joseph Diorio, Portage County Health Commissioner.

The Ohio Public Health Advisory System was established to increase the information available to Ohioans about COVID-19 risk at the county level. Seven indicators are analyzed to assess risk for each county. The indicators are as follows:

1. New Cases Per Capita – Flagged if greater than 50 cases per 100,000 residents over the last two weeks.
2. Sustained Increase in New Cases – Flagged if increasing trend of at least 5 days in overall cases by onset date.
3. Proportion of Cases Not Congregate Cases – Flagged if proportion of cases that are not in a congregate setting goes over 50%.
4. Sustained Increase in Emergency Room Visits – Flagged if increasing trend of at least 5 days in the number of visits to the emergency department with COVID-like illness or a diagnosis.
5. Sustained Increase in Outpatient Visits - Flagged if increasing trend of at least 5 days in the number of people going to a health care provider with COVID symptoms who then receive a COVID confirmed or suspected diagnosis.
6. Sustained Increase in New COVID-19 Hospital Admissions – Flagged if increasing trend of at least 5 days in the number of new hospitalizations due to COVID.
7. Intensive Care Unit (ICU) Bed Occupancy – Flagged if percentage of occupied ICU beds in each region goes above 80% for at least three days in the last week.

For more information about the Ohio Public Health Advisory System, visit <http://coronavirus.ohio.gov>. For more information about the coronavirus situation in Portage County visit [www.portagehealth.net/COVID-19](http://www.portagehealth.net/COVID-19). If you have questions, call the COVID-19 Call Line (330) 296-9919, ext. 198. The call line is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday.

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