



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Health Department Urges Diligence, Cooperation to Dampen Viral Surge **Current Surge 4th Highest in Pandemic**

BELLINGHAM, WA -- Whatcom County is experiencing a significant increase in COVID-19 activity. This week's case count is the fourth-highest since the onset of the pandemic. Daily case counts are regularly approaching highs not seen since January, when COVID-19 cases were at their all-time peak. The Whatcom County Health Department urges immediate action from all residents, regardless of vaccination status, to curb the spread of the virus.

"We are all disappointed that we're entering another significant surge, after much community effort to re-open our economy and ensure access to vaccines," said Erika Lautenbach, director of the Whatcom County Health Department. "Vaccination is key to getting out of this pandemic, and if you haven't yet gotten vaccinated, I urge you to do it now. But we also need to use all other tools available to us, including masks."

As with other surges, the following precautions will lower case counts, hospitalizations and deaths:

- Get vaccinated. Vaccine completion is needed for full protection. For brands that require two doses -- Pfizer and Moderna -- it's important to get the second dose. Full vaccination occurs two weeks after the last dose in a series. Find a local provider at [VaccineLocator.doh.wa.gov](https://vaccinelocator.doh.wa.gov) or WhatcomCounty.US/CovidVaccine.
- Avoid crowded spaces, whether indoors or outdoors.
- Wear a mask or face covering in public.
 - If unvaccinated or partially vaccinated, this is required in all public indoor spaces. If vaccinated, this is recommended. Vaccination protects against the worst effects of the virus, but breakthrough cases happen, and vaccinated people can spread the Delta variant.

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- If you have [symptoms of COVID-19](#), get tested right away, whether or not you're vaccinated.
 - If unvaccinated, isolate at home while waiting for the test result, and if it's positive, remain isolated for [the required period of time](#). Call 911 if [emergency warning signs](#) of COVID-19 occur.
 - Vaccinated people should also isolate while waiting for the test result if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If positive, remain in isolation at home for the [required period](#) of time.

Testing demand for symptomatic individuals during this surge is compounded by an increased demand for travel testing. The Health Department's top priority is getting people with symptoms of COVID-19 tested. Those seeking testing for travel are asked to go to locations other than the site operated by Northwest Laboratory at Bellingham International Airport. An up-to-date list of COVID-19 testing providers is available at [WhatcomCounty.US/CovidTesting](https://www.whatcomcounty.us/covid-testing), and many COVID-19 testing sites accept same-day appointments.

Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms or exposure who's unable to get a timely appointment should call 360-778-6075. People with symptoms who are unable to get tested right away should isolate themselves at home away from others.

Due to the current, sudden and heavy workload, Whatcom County's contact tracing staff also may not be able to contact people who test positive right away. People who do test positive need to isolate at home and notify their close contacts, even if they don't hear from the health department.

"Right now our community is facing even higher levels of infection, but we're not helpless," said Whatcom County Health Officer Dr Greg. Stern. "We can protect ourselves and our community from this dangerous virus by taking immediate, familiar preventive actions that have worked in the past, and with more people getting vaccinated, can turn things around this time.

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