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Weekly Bulletin

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Subject: Island County COVID-19 Response

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Review of Current News and Updates

Numbers and data. At the time of this writing, Island County has 273 confirmed COVID-19 cases, including 11 deaths. This week's attached data sheet reflects an increase in rate of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 from 18.86 to 21.22 for the week of 8/16/20-8/29/20. However, the average weekly rate over the last month is 19.16 cases per 100,000.

As noted last week, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) is now reporting COVID-19 testing data using the total number of tests completed. This is a change from previous reporting, which reflected the total number of unique individuals ever tested. This has resulted in a higher testing rate for Island County.

Our efforts are working. IDM released their most recent COVID-19 state [Situation Report](#) on August 28. This report shows an overall plateau in cases with a potentially slight decline in cases. While this news is encouraging, we need to continue to practice safe mitigation measures to reduce COVID-19 cases further.

Vaccine expectations. The August 17 modeling [report](#) by the Institute for Disease Modeling (IDM) indicates that mitigation measures such as masking, social distancing, restrictions on gatherings, and limitations on traveling have had some success in reducing COVID-19 spread. These measures need to remain in place until a safe and effective vaccine is available. Recent news has focused on the CDC warning states to prepare for potential vaccine distribution as early as November. DOH recently released a [statement](#) clarifying that vaccines must first undergo Phase 3 trials prior to public distribution. At this time, all vaccine candidates are still in clinical trials to determine their safety and efficacy. It is important to empower our community and ourselves with patience, as we await a safe and effective vaccine.

Celebrate safely! Island County is currently in a reduced and modified Phase 3 of the Governor's Safe Start Reopening plan. We are not in full Phase 3, and many restrictions remain in place. As the holiday weekend approaches, please share the following reminders with our fellow Island County residents.

- Outside is safer than inside.
- Small groups are safer than large groups. Gatherings should include no more than 10 people outside of your household per week.
- Less time together is safer than more time together.
- Within six feet, face coverings are better than no face coverings.
- Non-essential travel outside of the county and state is highly discouraged at this time. Before necessary traveling, research destinations to assess exposure risk using the [Phase and Risk Assessment Dashboard](#) and [COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#).

Agritourism clarification. On August 28th, Governor Inslee released a summary of changes to guidance related to [agritourism](#) activities. The following additional activities are now permitted:

- Animal viewing
- Hay/wagon/train rides
- Children's play equipment/games
- Private fire pit/bonfires

Inslee extends 26 COVID-19 related proclamations. Governor Inslee recently announced the extension of 26 different proclamations until October 1, 2020 in response to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. See the linked letters from the Legislature on [August 27](#) and [August 31](#) for more information.

Emergency insurance orders extended. Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler has extended two emergency orders. His [order requiring health insurers to waive copays and deductibles](#) for any consumer requiring testing for coronavirus (COVID-19) and his [order protecting consumers from receiving surprise bills](#) for lab fees related to medically-necessary diagnostic testing for COVID-19 are both extended until Sept. 27. Read the full news release [here](#).

Community guidance changes. Moving forward, the weekly [community guidance](#) resource will be updated every other week. Ongoing updates will continue to take place on the Island County Public Health COVID-19 webpage, Island County Public Health facebook page, and through regular community communication and issued press releases.

Testing still advised for close contacts. Despite a recent CDC update to testing guidance related to the testing of close contacts, WA DOH is currently reporting that guidance around testing has not changed: if you have symptoms, you need to get tested. If you're a close contact of a confirmed case, you need to get tested. Close contacts of confirmed cases also need to stay at home away from others (quarantine) for 14 days after the last exposure even if they test negative for COVID-19, because it is possible for people who test negative to still be incubating the virus, and become contagious later.

People with symptoms of COVID-19 or who have had close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 should make testing their first priority. However, timing is key. Testing too soon after an exposure may give you a negative result, even if you've been infected. If exposed and you develop symptoms, testing that day or the next is recommended. If exposed and you don't develop symptoms, waiting 5-6 days after exposure to get a test is recommended. People must stay in quarantine for the entire 14 days even if a test is negative. Read the full news release [here](#).

Available resources. A number of resources are currently available to Washingtonians that may help mitigate some negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Island County has been awarded funds under the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act ("CARES Act"). Individuals and families impacted by COVID-19 should complete the [online referral form](#) or call the Human Services Help Line at 360.678.2346 to learn more.
- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC) will [offer services remotely](#) until Sept. 30. In lieu of in-person visits, WIC may enroll new applicants, provide nutrition education and breastfeeding support and issue food benefits by phone or video chat.
- Island County Human Services is an accessible and responsive community resource. They can assist with housing resources, mental health care, substance use, developmental disabilities, veterans' resources, and early childhood parenting support.
<https://www.islandcountywa.gov/Humanservices/Pages/Home.aspx>
360-678-7880 (office phone tree) 360-678-2346 (helpline)

The call center is staffed Monday through Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm (360.678.2301).