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## PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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Hello Thurston County!

I hope you are enjoying the beginning of Spring. I wanted to take the opportunity to answer some of the questions that I have been getting from members of the public.

### **Do I need a second booster shot?**

A second COVID-19 booster dose was approved by the FDA, CDC, and Western States Pact at the end of March for individuals who are at higher risk of severe disease from COVID-19. People who are eligible for the second booster dose include anyone age 50 and older, and moderately to severely immune compromised individuals age 12 and older, may receive an additional mRNA (Pfizer or Moderna) booster dose four months after their initial booster dose as well as all adults who received both the Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) primary vaccine and booster dose. This second booster dose may be administered at least 4 months after the previous booster dose.

The current CDC definition for up to date on vaccine remains a primary series and a single booster dose at this time. I encourage everyone in Thurston County to stay up to date on their COVID-19 vaccinations and to consult with their health care provider if they have questions as vaccination remains one of the best tools we have to protect ourselves from COVID-19.

### **What can you tell me about at home COVID-19 tests?**

At home COVID-19 tests are a great way for people to test when they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed. If you test positive it is important to notify your close contacts so they can monitor for symptoms, get tested and quarantine if required. Additionally, follow the COVID-19 notification protocols for your school, childcare or workplace.

Individuals who test positive on at home tests should report test results to Washington State Department of Health by calling 1-800-525-0127 and pressing # (press #7 for Spanish or speak the language you need when the call is connected).

People who would like to obtain tests may use the following resources:

Free rapid test kits can be obtained from the Washington State Department of Health – [www.sayyescovidhometest.org](http://www.sayyescovidhometest.org) or 1-800-525-0127 or the through the federal government – [www.covidtests.gov](http://www.covidtests.gov) or 1-800-232-0233.

Insurance providers will also reimburse families for up to eight tests per month. People with insurance can contact their insurance company to get additional information about reimbursement.

**What about the BA.2 variant? Do we expect another case surge?**

The BA.2 subvariant is a subvariant of the Omicron (BA.1) variant, which is more transmissible than the Omicron variant and is now the dominant variant in the state of Washington. So far we have seen an uptick in cases and are starting to see an increase in COVID-19 outbreaks. Different countries have had different experiences with transmission patterns in response to the Omicron and BA.2 subvariant and it is too early to tell what our experience will be. I am continuing to monitor transmission patterns within the county.

The sequencing data for the state can be accessed here: <https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-02/420-316-SequencingAndVariantsReport.pdf>

**What is hospital/healthcare capacity like right now?**

Over the last few weeks the number of individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 and have been hospitalized has remained stable at a significantly lower rate than what we saw at our Delta and Omicron surge peaks.

The new CDC Community Level guidance is a good guide for members of the public who want to monitor the current COVID-19 situation in Thurston County. It takes into account hospital beds being used, hospital admissions, and the total number of new COVID-19 cases at the county level.

That information can be accessed here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

That is all for this week. Stay safe and healthy everyone!  
Wishing you the best of health,  
Dimyana Abdelmalek, MD, MPH