

3/25/2024

**NOTICE: This health alert provides written guidance for health care professionals and others who may need to take action to prevent or control a notifiable condition. It is not intended to provide guidance for the general public.*

Updated Viral Respiratory Illness Guidance

Thurston County Public Health and Social Services is aligning with the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) updated viral respiratory illness guidance for what to do when someone is sick with COVID-19, flu, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and other respiratory viruses. Employers must follow Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) COVID-19 requirements in the workplace: [L&I Requirements and Guidance for Preventing COVID-19](#). The guidance for settings not including healthcare settings can be found here: <https://doh.wa.gov/emergencies/covid-19/prevent-spreading-respiratory-viruses>

Guidance for the General Public

Members of the general public may return to normal activities when their symptoms are getting better overall, and they have not had a fever (without having to use fever-reducing medication) for at least 24 hours.

Because people can remain contagious even after they feel better, extra precautions during the first 5 days of returning to normal activities after COVID-19, flu, RSV, or other respiratory viruses are recommended. This includes wearing a mask, taking steps to improve airflow and filtration, frequent hand washing, regular cleaning, physical distancing, and, if possible, testing when planning to be around other people indoors.

People who are exposed to someone with a viral respiratory illness should consider taking precautions such as wearing masks, taking steps to improve airflow and filtration, practicing good hand hygiene, cleaning regularly, physical distancing, and/or testing.

Precautions for people at higher risk of severe disease

People who have COVID-19 can prevent spreading COVID-19 to people at higher risk of severe disease by:

Staying away from people at higher risk of severe disease until 10 days have passed since symptoms started or the date of the positive test if they had no symptoms or they test negative for COVID-19 with an antigen test. If people need to be around others at high risk of severe disease from COVID-19 after they have met the criteria for ending isolation during this period, the most protective step they can take is wearing a well-fitting mask around them.

People who have been exposed to COVID-19 can prevent the spread to people at high risk of severe disease by wearing a mask when around them for five days after exposure and testing for COVID-19 before coming into contact with them

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Guidance for Correctional and Homeless Shelter Settings

Homeless shelters and correctional facilities continue to have a high risk for transmission of respiratory viruses due to congregate living conditions, and people living in these settings often have underlying health conditions that increase their risk of severe outcomes from respiratory illnesses.

The COVID-19 isolation period for staff, clients, and incarcerated people is 7 days from symptom onset or date of positive test if symptoms don't develop provided that those who have symptoms are experiencing improvement and have been fever-free for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medications. Masking should continue until 10 days have passed.

Antigen testing can be used to determine if isolation and masking can be ended early. People who test negative with an antigen test on or after day 5 can leave isolation and stop wearing a mask.

People who have respiratory virus symptoms that are not better explained by another cause and do not test positive for COVID-19 should isolate away from others until symptoms have improved and they have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. After ending isolation they should wear a mask and take added precautions for the next 5 days.

Guidance for Healthcare Settings

People who are staying, working, or visiting in a healthcare setting, long-term care facility, or residential care setting should follow the guidance in [COVID-19 Infection Prevention in Health Care Settings](#). Flu guidance for health care settings and long-term care facilities can be found on the CDC's [Prevention Strategies for Seasonal Influenza in Healthcare Settings](#) webpage.

Non-clinical staff working in healthcare settings such as adult family homes and assisted living facilities that are following community COVID-19 guidance who work with people at high risk of severe disease from COVID-19 should consider taking additional precautions if they contract COVID-19 once they have met the criteria for ending isolation including masking for 10 days after symptom onset or date of positive test if they do not develop symptoms. Those who have been exposed to COVID-19 should consider wearing a mask for 5 days after exposure and testing.

Outbreaks

If there is an outbreak in a setting such as a workplace or congregate housing, it may be necessary to isolate for a specific period longer than you would otherwise to help stop the spread of COVID-19 or another respiratory virus. Please report outbreaks to Thurston County Public Health and Social Services at 360-968-4066.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE UPDATE

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION SECTION
THURSTON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
412 LILLY RD NE
OLYMPIA, WA, 98506-5132
DISEASE REPORTING: (360)786-5470
WWW.THURSTONCOUNTYWA.GOV/PHSS



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Resources:

- What To Do When You Are Sick With COVID-19 or Another Respiratory Virus| Washington State Department of Health: <https://doh.wa.gov/emergencies/covid-19/prevent-spreading-respiratory-viruses>
- L&I Requirements and Guidance for Preventing COVID-19| Washington State Department of Labor and Industries: <https://www.lni.wa.gov/agency/outreach/coronavirus/requirements-and-guidance-for-preventing-covid-19>
- COVID-19 Infection Prevention in Health Care Settings| Washington State Department of Health: <https://doh.wa.gov/emergencies/covid-19/health-care-providers/infection-prevention>

THANK YOU FOR REPORTING

TO REPORT A NOTIFIABLE CONDITION IN THURSTON COUNTY	
Voice mail for reporting non-immediately reportable conditions (24 hours a day) : Reporting a Notifiable Condition (thurstoncountywa.gov)	Phone: 360-786-5470 Fax: 360-867-2601
Day time immediately reportable conditions – Calls are answered during business hours Monday-Friday 8am-5pm (excluding holidays) and routed to the appropriate communicable disease team member.	Phone: 360-867-2610 Secure eFax: 1-833-418-1916
After hours immediately and 24-hour reportable conditions or a public health emergency	Call 1-800-986-9050
No one is available with Thurston County Public Health and condition is immediately notifiable or a public health emergency	Call 1-877-539-4344

Communicable Disease Updates are posted online at: [Communicable Disease Updates \(thurstoncountywa.gov\)](http://thurstoncountywa.gov)