

## **Letter to the Community: November 5, 2020**

Hello Thurston County! This week I received several questions about how to do everyday activities safely during the pandemic.

### **I depend on public transit. How can I use public transportation safely?**

One writer was specifically concerned about the safety of using public transit. The [CDC](#) issued guidance about how to ride public transit as safely as possible. This guidance includes washing or sanitizing hands before and after riding transit and not touching one's face with unwashed hands. In addition to maintaining six feet of distance with non-household members and wearing a mask that covers your nose and mouth, bringing a spare mask in case the one you are wearing gets wet or dirty is also a good idea.

Avoid touching high touch surfaces like kiosks, turnstiles, touch screens, and benches when possible, and use touchless payment where available. If you must use a high touch surface, wash or sanitize your hands as soon as you can afterwards. Maintaining six feet of physical distance with non-household members and avoiding gathering in groups around stations or stops is key in preventing COVID-19 spread on public transportation. Where markers of distance are present on public transportation, follow the markers and where they are not present leave several seats empty or one or more rows empty where possible to ensure a distance of six feet between you and other riders is maintained. Riding public transportation can be done safely.

### **What can you tell us about how to keep a rideshare safe? Windows down, masks, no talking?**

Another writer was interested in safe ride share practices. The key to making ride shares as safe as possible is to avoid riding with unmasked drivers or passengers or individuals not wearing masks that cover both their nose and mouth, avoiding high touch surfaces within the vehicle, sanitizing your hands after touching these if surfaces are unavoidable, and using touchless payment where possible. Maintaining physical distance in a ride share is essential. Limit the number of people in the ride share to include as few people as necessary, avoid rides with non-household members, and sit as far as possible from the driver. Opening the windows or setting the air ventilation system to non-recirculation mode promotes ventilation and reduces risk of transmission. Drivers should wear a mask when driving as well as clean and disinfect their cars as often as possible.

### **Do people need to wear masks when they are outside on walking trails?**

I have been glad to hear people in our community are spending time outdoors. This has brought up questions about masking while outdoors. When people are within six feet of non-household members even when they are outside, masking is required per [Order of the Secretary of Health 20-03](#). I have been encouraged by what I am hearing by members of the community who want to stay safe and distant on the many beautiful trails and outdoor recreational sites in our county.

### **What should we be considering when we decide to get a haircut?**

In Washington State, salons are operating with guidance to keep people safe while they get haircuts. In addition to special procedures for cleaning surfaces and equipment, hand hygiene, maintaining good ventilation, maintaining at least six feet of physical distance between clients, ensuring both stylists and clients are masked, clients are asked to self-screen for symptoms of COVID-19 prior to their

appointment, and not bring other guests with them to minimize the number of people in an enclosed environment.

Additionally, if the service provided includes removing a client's face mask, in addition to minimizing the amount of time the customer is uncovered and minimizing speaking during the process, the stylist must wear an N95 or, if not available, an FDA approved surgical mask and face shield. Using these protective measures in addition to robust hand hygiene measures and making sure people stay home if they are sick or have been exposed (<6 feet for longer than 15 minutes over a 24 hour period) to COVID-19 are an important piece in making haircuts as safe as possible during the pandemic.

Thank you all for sending such great questions this week. Some of the questions submitted this week will be addressed in next week's letter as well. I hope this advice helps all of you avoid COVID-19. As transmission in our community rises and we are going into winter it is more important than ever to be mindful of how we keep ourselves and our loved ones safe and healthy.

Wishing you the best of health,

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Thurston County Health Officer