

Letter to the Community: July 24, 2020

Hello Thurston County! We are definitely seeing an increase in COVID-19 cases in Thurston County. The most common ways people are becoming infected is through travel, social gatherings, and from other people within their household. Now is the time to be physically distant, but socially connected. I have been using video chats to stay connected with friends and family. I hope you are all remembering to wear a face covering, practice physical distancing, cover your cough, and wash your hands to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Together we can reduce the cases of COVID-19 in our county.

Yesterday, Governor Inslee [announced new measures](#) to curb the spread of COVID-19. Face covering are now required in all common spaces like elevators, university housing, hotels and motels, and congregate settings. The changes to the Safe Start Plan affect restaurants and bars, wedding and funerals, fitness centers, and entertainment regulations. Restaurants and bars cannot serve alcohol after 10:00pm, indoor seating is limited to no more than five people from the same household, indoor capacity is limited to 50%, game areas must close, and bars are outdoor service only. Weddings and funerals can proceed with ceremonies and a maximum of thirty people or 20% capacity whichever is fewer. Receptions are not allowed. Fitness centers operate at 25% capacity and group class sizes are limited to 10 people. Indoor recreation centers and card rooms are to remain closed. Indoor movie theaters can operate at 25% capacity. These measures serve to limit situations where people may not be able to maintain physical distancing, as well as activities that carry a higher risk of disease spread. It is important to follow these measures and reduce the spread of COVID-19 so we can have a safe return to public life.

The COVID-19 pandemic has sparked a severe shortage in our national blood supply. Many people need blood when they have severe anemia or are actively bleeding. Receiving a blood transfusion can be lifesaving. Donating blood is a good way to help people in your community! Blood banks have appointments available for people who would like to donate. Blood banks have strict physical distancing measures in place to keep blood donors safe. Thurston County Bloodwork Northwest is accepting donations. You can schedule an appointment online at <https://www.bloodworksnw.org/> or call 800-398-7888.

Don't let the pandemic ruin your health! People still have health problems that need attention. Many physicians' offices have video and telephone appointments as well as in-office appointments that accommodate physical distancing. For medical problems that can't wait like heart attacks, strokes, severe abdominal pain, difficulty breathing, and severe infections, seeking immediate medical care is vital. Taking care of our health during COVID-19 may be more challenging, but there are health care resources available. When something is emergent, please don't wait to seek medical attention.

While we are all waiting for the COVID-19 vaccine, it is important to remember to get immunizations for other preventable diseases. I have spent time working with communities around the world where people walk miles carrying their children to get them vaccinated. I have seen polio, measles, and tetanus have devastating effects on children. I have seen adults suffering the late effects of these diseases because they were not immunized. It is important to use the safe and effective tools we have available to prevent the diseases we can. You can do your part by contacting your health care provider to make sure you and your family are current with recommended vaccines.

As our case numbers rise, please follow the new guidelines meant to slow the spread of COVID-19. I ask you to support your friends and neighbors by following these measures. I know when we all keep our

physical distance, wear face coverings, wash our hands frequently, cover our coughs, and avoid social gatherings, we can reduce our case counts and work towards a safe return to public life.

Wishing you all the best of health,

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Thurston County Health Officer