

Letter to the Community: August 18, 2020

Hello Thurston County!

Last week we enjoyed some beautiful, yet significantly warmer weather than we have had so far this year. This week is shaping up to be a little cooler but still plenty warm. While we all want to get out and enjoy the weather, I want to remind you how to protect yourself from the sun and stay cool. You can do this by applying sunscreen, with an SPF of 15 or higher, thirty minutes before going outside, wearing loose fitting, light colored clothing, and avoiding exertional activity in the middle of the day when ambient temperatures are highest. Also remember to stay well hydrated and drink before you feel thirsty. You lose salt and minerals in sweat but they can be replaced by drinking low calorie sports drinks. Beverages with a lot of sugar or alcohol are dehydrating and should be avoided. If you have pets, make sure they have access to cool water as well.

Also, with the weather being so warm, the inside of a car can become dangerously hot. Do not leave children or pets inside a parked car even if the windows are partially open as they are at risk for heat stroke or even death. Safe enjoyment of this warm weather is a good way to boost your mood and activity levels.

The sun has given our minds a bit of reprieve from COVID-19 but we still need to be diligent in how we interact with others in the community. We are still in the moderate transmission range (between 25 and 75 cases per 100,000 over 14 days) for COVID-19. Thurston County currently has a higher rate of transmission than when we entered Phase 3, which required less than 25 new cases per 100,000 over 14 days. As of today, August 18, 2020, we show 51.4 new cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 over the past 14 days. This data illustrates how much of an increase we have seen since the Secretary of Health approved our application to move to Phase 3 on June 24, 2020.

In our county, we continue to see spread within a household as a major driver of infections. This is because once one member of a household tests positive, other members are likely to become infected with the virus as well. Other activities contributing to our transmission rates are social gatherings and travel. The most important ways you can stay safe are maintaining six feet of distance with non-household members AND wearing a face covering, limiting social gatherings to ten people or less per week, and gathering outside when possible. Working together we can bring transmission rates down and work towards a safe return to public life.

At this time, Thurston County Public Health and Social Services department is managing five known congregate care outbreaks in two adult family homes, one adult group home, and two long-term care facilities. As this virus continues to spread, you may see additional outbreaks occur in our county. For the most current information on outbreaks and data related to COVID-19, please check our website at: <https://www.thurstoncountywa.gov/phss/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>. We provide updates to this information around 3:00 pm each day. You can also follow us on these social media platforms:

- Facebook – [Thurston County Washington](#)
- Twitter – [@ThurstonCounty](#)
- PHSS Facebook – [Thurston County Public Health and Social Services](#)
- PHSS Twitter - [@ThurstonHealth](#)

As your health officer, I appreciate hearing the questions you have about COVID-19. Each week, in my community letter, I will be addressing some of the most common questions. If you have questions, please send them to tcphss.pio@co.thurston.wa.us. Please note, the question received at this email address will not be responded to individually and you may not receive an answer to your question. Instead, I will choose a selection of the questions submitted each week and address them in my letter to the community. I am excited to be able to answer your most pressing public health related questions and invite everyone in Thurston County to submit a public health question that has captured their interest. I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Wishing you the best of health,

Dimyana Abdelmalek, MD, MPH
Health Officer, Thurston County