

Letter to the Community: November 20, 2020

Hello Thurston County! Thanksgiving is a national holiday typically celebrated with friends and family around a dinner table to express gratitude for the blessings of the previous year. As families gather this year in celebration, the holiday will look different.

On Sunday, November 15, 2020, the Governor issued a four-week statewide set of [restrictions](#) in response to the increased spread of COVID-19 throughout the state. In the guidance for indoor social gatherings, the Governor prohibits congregating with people outside your household unless you quarantine for 14 days prior to the gathering or quarantine seven days prior to the gathering and receive a negative COVID-19 test result no more than 48-hours prior to the gathering.

In Thurston County, our two drive through testing locations at Providence Medical Group Hawk's Prairie Clinic and Sea Mar Community Health Center are experiencing very high levels of testing which are resulting in very long wait times, as long as 4-5 hours. Both of these locations are testing only symptomatic people or people identifies as close contacts. A close contact is defined as someone who is less than six feet apart for 15 minutes or longer over a 24-hour period of time.

Per the Governor's guidance, if you want to get tested for COVID-19 before going to a social gathering for the holiday, you must contact your primary care provider for a test and the test may not be covered by your health insurance company. The drive through testing locations and most other testing locations in the county will not test asymptomatic individuals.

I encourage everyone to celebrate Thanksgiving with only members in their immediate household. We all want to connect with loved ones, friends, and extended family during the holiday and using virtual options like Zoom, FaceTime, Skype, etc. is vital this holiday season. I will be connecting with my family members on Thanksgiving virtually. For more information about how to connect safely, please visit the state's [Safer Gathering](#) website.

We know the mitigation measures of wearing a face covering, staying at least six feet from non-household members, and frequently washing your hands for 20 seconds reduce the spread of COVID-19. Please follow these recommendations to stay healthy and safe this holiday season!

Wishing you the best of health,

Dimyana Abdelmalek, MD, MPH
Thurston County Health Officer