



ISLAND COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

Administration

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ISLAND COUNTY COVID-19 Updated Community Guidance December 16, 2020

Island County Public Health wants to make sure that the citizens of Island County have access to reliable guidance surrounding COVID-19. We update guidance bi-weekly and hope that you use this to help inform and empower yourself and our community.

Numbers and data

At the time of this writing, Island County has 802 confirmed COVID-19 cases, including 18 deaths. This number is expected to change after this evening's online case count update. A case rate of 186.28 cases per 100,000 was calculated for the two-week period of 11/29/20-12/12/20. The Island County [November Behavioral Health Report](#) and the [November Epidemiology Brief](#) are now available for more information on local impacts.

Washington State Department of Health (DOH) is reporting significant delays in importing test data into the state system known as the Washington Disease Reporting System (WDRS). These delays may impact rates and case counts. The state is also modifying its method of counting COVID-19 deaths, which may cause changes to death counts. Island County counts have not changed at this time.

DOH also recently released the most updated version of the [Washington State COVID-19 Transmission Situation Report](#) and the [State Outbreak Report](#).

COVID-19 Vaccine Update

Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine was approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Western States Workgroup. This has now kick-started the federal government's distribution of the potentially lifesaving doses to 64 states, territories and major cities across the nation. Vaccine arrived in Washington state on Monday, December 14.

Partners within Island County assembled a planning team in September to prepare for distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine. This team worked to assemble the necessary equipment and infrastructure to receive and administer vaccine. Vaccine will be arriving in Island County this week.

Prioritizing vaccinations will follow the phased approach guidance from DOH. See current information on the phased approach [here](#). This first shipment of vaccine will be for those that work with and around confirmed and positive COVID-19 patients, including healthcare workers, first responders, and residents and staff of long-term care and assisted living facilities. Direct outreach will be made to those eligible for this phase.

As more vaccine is received in early 2021, additional providers throughout Island County will have vaccine to administer and vaccine will be available to the community in phases, like boarding groups getting on an airplane. DOH will release a web tool in early January to help people identify their phase and where they can get vaccinated.

The [WA DOH COVID-19 Vaccine website](#) remains the most up-to-date source of information regarding the safety, phasing and availability of COVID-19 vaccine in Washington, as well as the [Centers for Disease Control's Vaccine website](#). Please also see WhidbeyHealth's [press release](#) regarding the COVID-19 vaccine.

We still need to practice COVID safety behaviors

The approval of a COVID-19 vaccine and the beginning of the vaccination process is a huge, positive milestone in the pandemic. Currently, though, we need to continue to follow all guidance to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community. Vaccination will be a long journey and it will not slow the spread of COVID-19 immediately.

As you look towards the holidays, please remember to modify holiday plans to keep you, your loved ones, and your community healthy. Below is a list of recommended guidance and some ideas for alternative holiday activities.

Current Recommendations

- Avoid indoor gatherings with people outside of your household. This includes modifying or canceling holiday plans with extended family and friends.
- Avoid visiting non-essential indoor spaces.
- Mask in all indoor spaces where you encounter people outside of your household.
- If you are over 65, do not go into indoor spaces where people are unmasked.
- Wash or sanitize your hands (and the hands of children you care for) often.
- Stay home if you are sick or were recently exposed to someone with COVID-19.

Alternative Holiday Activities

- On-screen get togethers - Sure, it won't be quite the same, but scheduling a few virtual holiday gatherings can take the sting out of being separated. Getting together online to cook, open gifts, decorate desserts, do a craft project, listen to a playlist, or read stories can create a bit of the togetherness we crave. Consider time zones when scheduling, and make sure that any people who are not tech-savvy get help beforehand so they can be included.
- Secret gift exchange - Assign each family or friend a name and ask them to mail or do a no-contact delivery of a small gift they make or buy to their assigned person. Open gifts on a group video chat and try to guess who gave what to whom.
- Learn a recipe together - Haven't you always thought Nonna deserves a cooking show? Pick a favorite family recipe, share an ingredient list ahead of time with friends or family, and then get together virtually to try cooking or baking. Good times are guaranteed, whether you end up with delicious dumplings or poorly decorated cookies.

Embrace available resources

- If you are struggling with Homelessness, call the Housing Support Center at (360) 678-8284.
- Learn about available COVID-19 pandemic assistance and other support services by completing the [online referral form](#) or call the Help Line at 360.678.2346 M-F 8:30am – 4:30pm.
- As the economic impacts of COVID-19 continue, more families are taking advantage of free meals provided by school districts. While all students may be provided free meals through the end of December, families are strongly encouraged to complete a School Meal Application now. This application determines a

student's eligibility for free and reduced-price meals. Read more [here](#).

- The WA State Department of Commerce is collaborating with organizations to provide support through the [Small Business Resiliency Assistance](#) program. Support is available for small businesses and nonprofits in a variety of ways, including recovery and re-opening planning, employee retention, [and translation services](#).
- WA DOH also offers support and resources for mental health during COVID-19, visit their [mental and emotional wellbeing web page](#) and listen to their new "Coping with COVID" podcast and blog series. If you need someone to talk to about stress due to COVID-19, call [Washington Listens](#) at 1.833.681.0211.

If you have questions or concerns about COVID-19 in Island County, start by visiting our [website](#) or our [Facebook](#) page. The Island County call center may be reached at **360.678.2301**; Monday through Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm.