

KITTITAS COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH
VIDEO UPDATE
Tuesday, March 23, 2021

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Today's video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efwHfgNcSA4>
KCPHD channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyQzBwJLbkLj7WueKJ5w7mQ/>
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Good morning. It's Dr. Larson to talk about COVID-19. As of yesterday, we are in Phase 3 of the governor's Reopening Washington guidelines. We'll talk a little bit about that. I will also talk about vaccine uptake, vaccination, and who your trusted sources are. Finally, I will talk about moving forward.

If you go on the governor's website, there's a chart that says what we can do in Phase 3. Phase 3 allows for 50% capacity in open businesses, including worship services and restaurants. Those things are good, but in some ways, they're not quite good enough. That's 9000 people for our rodeo in the fall and that's not where we want to be. We like doing the rodeo, and we like things like Bares and Broncs, which should happen in May. We need to be able to have more than 9000 people at the rodeo.

To move forward, we need to decrease the amount of disease in our community. We will talk in a moment about how we might be able to do that.

It's great that we, and the whole state, are in Phase 3. There is no Phase 4 yet; that is being worked on. To see if we can stay in Phase 3, numbers are reevaluated again on April 12. We are now moving forward, or backward, as a county again (instead of as a region). We haven't been having hospital capacity issues in Kittitas County, so the main metric we need to meet is fewer than 100 cases per seven days. Larger counties have a metric of fewer than 200 cases per 14 days per 100,000 people. That works out about the same for Kittitas County.

As of March 12, we had 104 cases per week. We're right on the edge. We won't necessarily be moved immediately back to Phase 2, but it's possible. There are things we need to work on as a community so we can continue to move forward, and perhaps have more than 9000 people at the rodeo. We need to have less disease.

And how can we do that? The main way is to be vaccinated when

you can. I have Dr. Merrill-Steskal's radio shirt on today. John and I have been friends for 37 years, since medical school. Dr. Merrill-Steskal knows more about vaccines than anyone in our county. He did a one-year vaccine fellowship, and both he and I realize the vaccines are safe. If you have questions about vaccine safety, you can talk to your health care providers.

The three vaccines we have currently (Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson) are all safe. Whether you want to have the farmer's market in Roslyn open this summer, whether you want to have a rodeo with 40,000 people in the stands, whether you want schools reopened fully in the fall, whether you want to hug your grandma at the nursing home, the answer is to be vaccinated.

As our community gets vaccinated, our numbers go down. There are fewer people to be infected and then we can stay in Phase 3 and even move to Phase 4 when there is one. Then we can have the events in our county happening.

We're not dependent on what is happening in the South Central region or what is happening in King County. It's all dependent on our own behavior as individuals. Hang in there.

We have some concerns about variant disease. We have the B117 variant, the B1351 variant (initially found in South Africa), as well as variants from California and Brazil, in Washington state. The more people we can get vaccinated, there fewer bodies get infected with the virus, so it has fewer opportunities to mutate into a different viral strain. And then we can move forward.

Please consider being vaccinated! We have vaccine clinics going on all the time.

There's a list of things that came out from the CDC this morning about what you can do once you are vaccinated. For example, there's CDC guidance for school reopening. That guidance was approved by all the health officers in the state and it's going to the governor. That will allow for kids to be closer together in the schools. If a teacher is vaccinated, we don't have to worry about that teacher potentially being exposed to COVID-19 and having to quarantine. There are just a lot of good reasons to be vaccinated.

I think the Governor will accept the CDC guidance for school reopening in the next week. Oregon accepted that guidance yesterday. It allows our kids to get back to school, closer together. K-5 can be within 3' so they should be back.

If our incident rate is above 100, the high school and middle school kids have to be kept further apart. We want to bring our numbers down, keep people safe, and continue to open up.

We expect a surge of COVID-19 after Spring Break, which is happening in Ellensburg now. If you have traveled out of state, outside your bubble, please consider being tested when you come back. Continue to wear your mask, to socially distance, and please get your vaccination.

If you really have a good question about vaccine, please call Family Medicine in Ellensburg and ask Dr. Merrill Steskall. He would have an answer for you, and steer you in the right direction in regard to vaccine.

Thank you for paying attention. We'll see you next week. Have a good Spring Break. Thanks a lot.

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