

KITTITAS COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH
VIDEO UPDATE
Tuesday, March 30, 2021

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Today's video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqS2a_bYzn8

KCPHD channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyQzBwJLbkLj7WueKJ5w7mQ/>

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Good morning, it's Mark Larson here to talk about COVID-19 in KC

Today, I'll talk about the vaccination, about school reopening, and about our current phases/cases in Kittitas County.

We are really close -- *really really close* -- to getting things back to normal, but we're not there yet. I'm asking you to hold on a little bit longer, to continue to wear masks, social distance, and get vaccinated. We've done a lot of good work, and we are so close to being done with COVID-19, but numbers are starting to go back up again.

This is *not* the time to drop the ball. We are on the five yard line so it's time to continue to do good work.

There are three different versions of the COVID-19 vaccine available: Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson. We have vaccine clinics every week in both upper and lower Kittitas county, and we will have a Saturday clinic in lower Kittitas County soon.

The ability for more people to be vaccinated will start on March 31, which is Wednesday. On that day, people in Phase 1B Tiers 2, 3, and 4 can be vaccinated, so a lot more people can be vaccinated as a result.

President Biden has said he wants the vaccine available to everyone by May 1 at the latest. It will happen sooner than that in Washington state. The health officers and directors had a discussion last Friday, giving guidance to the governor when it comes to getting more vaccine in arms. I expect a decision to be made soon.

At the latest, anyone 16 years and older can get vaccinated by May 1. Not all the vaccines have been approved for 16+; one is for 18+. Age does make a difference.

Please get vaccinated when it's your turn. This will allow us to move forward, for our numbers to go down, and for schools, businesses and the Rodeo to reopen.

Vaccines are safe, and they're effective at preventing serious disease and death, but the data from the Centers for Disease Control is showing that the vaccines prevent disease transmission and us getting even mild disease, so please get vaccinated when it's your turn.

All the schools are moving forward to getting more kids back in schools. The CDC came out with guidance, based on good science, that showed there there wasn't much difference, when it comes to transmission of disease, between 3' distance and 6' distance between the kids.

Other countries have been using 3' or one meter for quite awhile without a change in the disease rate in schools. Kids do not transmit disease as well as adults, especially kids in the K-5 grades. All of our county school districts are working to get more kids back in school.

We have had 134 cases of COVID-19 in all the schools since the beginning, with no in-school transmission. This is because of masking, washing hands, and the kids have been spread apart We will have more kids in the classroom, but that doesn't mean we'll have more kids at risk.

I'm meeting with the school unions this week. I have already met with the school superintendents and nurses and together we're working on continuing a voluntary testing program, as well as continuing to test and do case and contact investigation in the schools.

When outside the school setting, please continue to set a good example and mask. The kids in the schools who get COVID-19 get it from us, as we do things like go to birthday parties and those types of things.

As I said earlier, we are not there yet. Schools need to be opened, teachers and school staff have gotten vaccinated, and we're ready to get the kids back in school.

The governor has said all schools need to be back in full in the fall, but I think that will happen in Kittitas County before the end of this school year. It's harder with the 6-12 grades than the K-5 kids. Schools are working hard on this.

I also wanted to touch base on where we are with our current reopening phases. Kittitas County is in Phase 3 currently. On April 12, one and a half weeks away, there will be a reevaluation, and we can move backward. We need to have fewer than 100 cases in a two-week period of time. We're at 114 cases right now, which may not seem like much, but it is above the level of where we need to be to stay in Phase 3.

We also need to have fewer than three hospitalizations per week, and we're at two right now.

We're close! But are not there yet. Please continue to wear your mask. We want to stay in Phase 3 and move on to Phase 4, and that depends on us wearing masks, socially distancing, washing hands, and getting vaccinated.

Thanks a lot, we'll see you next week.

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