

KITTITAS COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH  
VIDEO UPDATE  
Tuesday, November 17, 2020

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Today's video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xa3hmy6nGcc>

KCPHD channel:

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

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Good morning, it's Dr. Larson, talking about COVID-19 in Kittitas County. A lot has happened in the last week, which we'll touch base on.

First, The incident rate for Kittitas County as of Monday this week is 186.8 cases per 100,000 for 14 days (October 24 through Nov 6). We build in a week at the end for collecting data so that we can make sure the data is correct.

The incident rate we shoot for when it comes to starting schools is fewer than 75 cases. As of yesterday, all schools are open in Kittitas County in hybrid models. That's a big lift for them; they are working really hard.

We have had some cases of COVID-19 in the schools, but there hasn't been any secondary transmission. That means someone (student, teacher, or staff) got the disease in the community and came to school. But because of the policies and procedures that the school has in place (social distancing, handwashing, and masking), we haven't had transmission at the schools, so we have been able to keep the schools open That's a big call out to them.

The other big call out is to Central Washington University, where they did exit testing this past week before the students go home for the holidays. 361 students were tested and eight of those were positive. The students who were tested were not a random controlled sampling of students -- they were a self-selected group of kids whose parents were concerned, or who themselves were concerned.

That's a 2.2% prevalence rate in the community, meaning 2.2% were positive for COVID-19. That's higher than we think the prevalence is in our non-state community. We don't know for sure because we haven't done broad testing in the community, but we think the prevalence rate in the community is about 1%.

Another nice thing about the exit testing is that 134 of the CWU students tested for COVID-19 also got the influenza vaccine at that time. Influenza doesn't cause COVID-19, but both diseases are happening together in the winter time. If you get an influenza vaccination, it's less likely you'll get influenza, and that helps us out a lot.

Kudos to CWU. Their students are in the middle of finals and will be going home this next week. They don't come back until January, and when they do come back, the ones who live on campus or who will attend in-person classes will be tested for COVID-19.

For the first two weeks of November, through Monday of this week, we have had 12 CWU students test positive, while 101 community members tested positive during the same time period. We have a 5% positive rate, which is higher than we want it to be (and it's not because we are doing more testing). We want the percent positive rate to be lower than 2%.

Last month, for the whole month, we had just 136 community members. My ask is to wear masks, stay at home, don't have large gatherings for the holidays, and watch out for others. I'd like to not have 200 cases in the community by the end of November.

The Governor issued a 14-day travel quarantine. If you travel outside of Washington for the holidays, or you come from California to Washington state, you should quarantine for 14 days. That's a "should." Since we're not an island, we can't say "shall" quarantine like in Hawaii (where you'd land and then quarantine for 14 days).

We're trying to reduce our numbers with this quarantine. We're in a period of exponential growth in the state as a whole. Moreso on the west side of the state and in the Spokane area, but our numbers are going up here as well. That 14 day quarantine applies to all of us. If you have children coming back for the holidays, they should quarantine.

This las week, the Governor had a fireside chat, talking about Thanksgiving. We should only have Thanksgiving with our immediate family and not others. We'd really like to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in Washington state. Our hospitalizations and deaths have been going up statewide. We haven't had any deaths in Kittitas County since August, but we are right next to King County and Yakima County so that won't necessarily remain the case.

On Sunday, the Governor gave a series of orders that are now in place for the next four weeks.

[iPhone noises in background.]

My phone (or Siri) is having a problem.

For the next four weeks, there are restrictions on our behavior. They include no in-person gatherings with people outside our family. Indoors is bad -- transmission occurs when we're inside, with our masks off. If having a Thanksgiving get together, it should only be with your immediate family.

Outside activities are okay, but only with five people or fewer who are not in your family.

Places where we know transmission has occurred are also closed for four weeks. This includes gyms, restaurants, bars, sporting facilities, etc.

It's difficult to know exactly where transmission occurs. The Kittitas County commissioners asked me to look at our cases and where they originate. People say they got the virus from family members or roommates, but those family members and roommates had to have gotten it from somewhere.

When we go somewhere where we take the masks off, even if they are doing a really good job, there's the possibility of COVID-19 transmission. Some of the restaurants in town have done a really good job at social distancing, separating their tables and chairs, reducing the number of people at the facility, and with the people working there wearing masks. But I could still be sitting there for an hour, eating with people outside my family, and be spreading the disease.

Our goal is to keep people safe, to keep K-12 schools moving forward, and to help with the economy. I know this will be difficult for businesses and we're looking at ways for getting funding for the restaurants and bars impacted by this.

My ask is for all of us to do our part to reduce the spread of COVID-19 by reducing interactions with others, wearing masks when not in our own private office, and by being kind and watching out for others.

I will do a talk again before the Thanksgiving holiday. Those are today's updates.

There will be a community-wide virtual meeting on Thursday from 5:30 to 7:00 PM with multiple leaders on board. Please tune in to that.

Thanks a lot and have a good day.

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