

KITTITAS COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH
VIDEO UPDATE
Tuesday, December 15, 2020

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Today's video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZYfbifBLIU>

KCPHD channel:

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

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Good afternoon, it's Dr. Larson here to talk about COVID-19.

We'll talk today about a couple of things, including where we're at numbers wise, the COVID-19 vaccine, and harm reduction as we look forward to Christmas.

Our numbers continue to go up. Our incident rate is just below 600 right now. To go into Phase 3, we had to be fewer than 25 cases per 100,000 for 14 days. That means you have to assume that everyone you see has COVID-19. I will repeat that: *Make an assumption that everyone you see has COVID-19.*

A lot of people in our community have the disease, some who are symptomatic and some who are asymptomatic. If you travel to Idaho, the numbers are the same. If you travel to Grant County, the numbers are higher. If you go to Yakima County, their numbers are actually a little bit lower. If you go to California, their numbers are definitely higher.

People traveled for Thanksgiving, and the numbers went up like we knew they would. People made decisions that were good for their family, but not necessarily good for us as a community. People went because they had the reservations already made, and our numbers went up. I do hope they will kind of level off. We were above 600 earlier, and now we're below.

We don't want to have that boost a Christmas, but we expect to.

Our percent positive rate is still just below 12%, with a goal of 2%. That means a lot of people in the community have COVID-19. I looked back through all of our cases, and the two strings tying all these together is us not wearing masks, and being close to someone else for a prolonged period of time.

It really doesn't matter what you're doing. If you're sitting on a coach with a neighbor watching an entire Seahawks game, without

wearing masks, you're going to be exposed to COVID-19. If you go to church and you're not wearing a mask, and you're singing, you will get COVID-19. If your workplace doesn't enforce masking, you will get COVID-19. And this is all because we have a lot of people out there who have COVID-19.

Do those things that we know work, such as wearing a mask and keeping the six foot social distancing. We want to keep businesses and schools open.

The school semester ends this Friday, but we continue having cases in school. We just had our first case transmitted at school. A teacher, who was positive, made a decision to sit in a small room for an hour eating lunch without a mask on. Decisions like this lead to transmission.

That's where we are from a numbers standpoint.

The vaccine is on its way. We will be getting a pallet (they call it a "pizza box") of COVID-19 vaccine. It's already gotten to Grant County; it got there today. We expect ours in the next couple of days. It will first go to health care personnel, first responders, and people who live and work in the nursing home. That is the Pfizer vaccine, and we'll soon also be getting the Moderna vaccine. Both are a two-shot series of MRNA vaccine. The vaccines are safe and effective.

I'm asking you to get vaccinated when your turn comes. We want to get businesses, schools, and churches back open again. We have to have some trust, so I'm asking you to trust me that the vaccines have been vetted. We should be thankful to President Trump that he pushed through vaccine development with lots and lots of money. There's a lot of science behind them and we wouldn't be pushing them if they weren't safe to take.

You'll start seeing vaccines being given in Kittitas County probably by the end of this week. That's my hope.

I also want to talk about harm reduction. We talk about how to protect ourselves a lot in Public Health, for example with substance abuse and sexually transmitted disease, and now with COVID-19.

Your family bubble is harm reduction. I'm staying with the three people in my family. If we do things with others, for example my son hiked Manastash Ridge with a friend today -- they drove in separate cars to the ridge, and then hiked with masks on --

that's harm reduction. Eating outside at a restaurant is less risky than eating inside the building. While at the restaurant, we should have the masks on and then lower it only to take bites. I know that's inconvenient and not fun, but it's harm reduction and allows us to keep the businesses open.

This Christmas, I am asking you to spend your money at our restaurants and stores in town so that we can keep them open. When we go to church, we should wear a mask, and we shouldn't be singing. I know everyone wants to have everything be normal again, but we have to do things that reduce the risk. If you're going to drive to Snoqualmie to go skiing, you should drive in separate cars, or only with people in your family bubble. At Mission Ridge, only immediate family will be allowed to ride together on the lift. If you go with a friend, the two of you will be on separate lifts.

It's not that we can't do anything, but we can do the things that reduce risk. This includes not doing things inside. If you go by Lincoln Elementary School, you will see their windows open during the day even though it's winter. This is to reduce risk.

Spend more time outside and with fewer people. Take care of your mental health. Wear a mask. Socially distance. Get the vaccine when it's available to you. We will get through this together. Maybe next school year will seem more like normal.

Take care, have a good week, and we'll talk to you soon. Thanks, bye.

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Transcription provided by:
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