

KITTITAS COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH
VIDEO UPDATE
Tuesday, December 29, 2020

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Today's video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrDXg3sJ0FM>

KCPHD channel:

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

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Good morning, it's Dr. Larson here to talk about COVID-19 in Kittitas County. I hope you all had a very small, quiet, safe Christmas. Today, we'll talk about numbers, about the COVID-19 vaccine, and about the upcoming holiday.

Our numbers are still *really* high. Our incident rate is 586 cases per 100,000 for 14 days, up from 581. That's not a large increase, but we've been above 500 for the last few weeks. That bump is from Thanksgiving, and we expect another bump after Christmas and New Year's. This is putting some stress on the hospital system and on the Public Health Department, because of the needed case and contact investigation.

The goal was to be fewer than 25 cases per 100,000 for 14 days for us to move into Phase 3; the phases will be changing, which I'll talk about in a minute.

Our percent positive rate (which is the number of tests coming back positive) is a reflection of whether or not we're doing enough testing. The goal is 2% positive, which means two tests per 100 are positive. Currently, we're at 12.3%, up from 10.6% last week, so we're not really testing enough people, and a lot of people are positive. That's telling us that there are a lot of people in our community that are positive for COVID-19.

We still continue to have cases in our long-term care facilities, with cases in a lot of businesses in the community (any situation where people are getting out and about, spending time without their mask on) as well.

In regard to case and contact investigation, we're having a really difficult time keeping up with the cases we're seeing. The target rate for people reached within 24 hours is 90% and we're well below that. The new cases in that two week period of time is 273 and our case and contact investigators are trying to reach those people. We are having issues with people not

answering their phones and not sharing information, but for the most part, people want to get better and help protect their neighbors.

We're starting to look at regional data for hospitalization. We've talked about how many patients are in the hospital at Kittitas Valley Health Care; as of yesterday, six out of 11 patients at the hospital had COVID-19. Usually, when we've talked about these numbers before, there have been one or two, so right now, there are a lot of people in the hospital with COVID-19.

In the south central region (which includes Kittitas, Yakima, Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla counties), 27% of the hospital beds are taken up with people who have COVID-19. The goal is less than 10%. The reason that's an important number isn't because the number of beds needed isn't available, but because the staff needed to take care of those patients is not available. And this is the case because we're seeing COVID-19 in health care workers, as those workers are exposed from their family members.

Staffing is a big issue across the United States. You can find data in regard to Los Angeles because their intensive care units are full and they don't have the staffing needed.

On a positive note, we have received the COVID-19 vaccine. Currently, we have two mRNA vaccines available, the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. We are giving those vaccines to those at highest risk and those who are put at high risk because of their work.

We're currently in Phase 1A, which includes health care workers, first responders, paramedics, ambulance crews, etc. We're working through those folks now. Also in this phase are folks in the nursing homes. Prestige will be getting their two-shot series of vaccines starting on Dec. 31 (the Moderna shots are 28 days apart and the Pfizer shots are 21 days apart).

We're also vaccinating our Upper County adult family homes; they were vaccinated this past week. We're working with the long-term care facilities here in town; they're contracted with CVS or Walgreens, but it may be awhile before they'd get those vaccines, so we're working on a situation where people in the nursing homes and long term care facilities can begin receiving the vaccinations.

We haven't fully figured out who is in Phase 1B yet, but we do

know that people older than 75 will fall into this tier. We'll probably starting giving the Moderna vaccine to these folks within the next week or so. Community Health of Central Washington and Safeway have the Moderna vaccine, as does KVH Public Health.

There's a process the state is putting out called Vaccine Finder, which we'll be able to push out through the PIO here at Public Health. Once available, you'll be able to see what phase you're in and where you can get vaccinated.

It's really important to get vaccinated. The vaccine is safe and is over 95% effective. There are side effects, as with all vaccines, but they are mild with the first dose (muscle soreness, rash, and those type of things), with a little bit more side effects on the second dose because then the the immune system response is involved.

Even though developed quickly, the vaccine is safe to take. At the Catholic Church on Sunday, the priest brought up the fact that there are no fetal cells used to make up the vaccine so you don't have to worry about that. There's a lot of false information on the internet, so please reach out to Public Health here in Kittitas County, or to your own provider, or to the Department of Health for accurate information. The vaccine is safe.

We look forward to having more and more people vaccinated. The higher the number of people vaccinated, the more quickly we'll get back to normal (having dinner in restaurants, having sports, etc.), so please consider being vaccinated when your phase comes up. We will get those phases out when available from the state. When someone calls you to tell you that your number is up, please make an appointment to get the vaccine.

We are starting to look at changing phases, related to the regional approach and data mentioned earlier. Why? Because most of our hospitalized patients that we can't take care of here go to other places (Yakima, King County, and Wenatchee), so we have to look at what is happening in the areas around us.

The last thing I want to say is please be safe over New Year's. Please celebrate outside and in small groups. We know it's an important holiday -- 2021 will be better than 2020, so there's a good reason to celebrate, just make sure you're outside. If you celebrate inside, please do so with small groups of your immediate family.

Remember to wear a mask and be kind. Thanks a lot.

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Transcription provided by:
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