



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WCHD RECOMMENDING PERSONAL PREVENTION, NOT CLOSURES

BELLINGHAM, WA - The Whatcom County Health Department (WCHD) is reminding Whatcom residents to take steps to protect their health and prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections. At this time, WCHD is not recommending other community-based strategies for infection control, such as school closures or canceling large public gatherings or events.

No cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in Whatcom County as of Monday afternoon.

“We understand that people are concerned about the spread of COVID-19 in our region, and it’s likely that we will see more cases of COVID-19 in the days and weeks to come,” said Dr. Greg Stern, Whatcom County Health Officer. “We are urging community members to practice personal prevention steps such as washing hands frequently and staying home when sick. These actions help to not only keep individuals healthy, but are also important to help slow the spread of disease through our community.”

PERSONAL PREVENTION STEPS:

Everyone should take simple steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses:

- Wash your hands frequently.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Cough and sneeze into a bent elbow or tissue, then throw away the tissue.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you or a family member is sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently used objects and surfaces.

People with mild symptoms should stay home and rest. People who are severely ill or at high risk for severe illness should stay home and **call** their health care provider.

Public health officials do not recommend healthy people wear masks to prevent respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. People who are sick should wear masks when they are seeking medical care. It is important that supplies of masks and other personal protective equipment remain available for health care providers who are evaluating and treating ill people.



PLANNING AHEAD

COVID-19 is likely to continue to spread in Washington. Although school closures and other community-based actions to prevent transmission of COVID-19 are not currently recommended, community members can take steps now to prepare for the possible spread of COVID-19 locally by planning ahead for how to adjust work and home routines.

- **Plan for how you will care for kids or other loved ones at home.** Talk about how you'll arrange childcare if schools or childcare facilities are closed. When schools are closed, children should also avoid gathering together.
- **Discuss sick leave policies and telework options with your employer.** If you need to stay home to care for kids or other loved ones, you may be able to work remotely.
- **Be ready to help neighbors and elders in your community.** Plan for ways that you can help take care of people who are at greater risk for serious illness, like people with chronic health conditions or people over 65. Talk with your neighbors, and plan for ways you can help take care of one another, like dropping off groceries on their doorstep or taking turns with childcare.

For more information on novel coronavirus

This is an emerging outbreak with rapidly evolving information. Updates will be made as new information emerges on the [DOH website](#) and [Whatcom County Health Department's website](#). The Washington State Department of Health has established a call center to address questions from the public. If you have questions about what is happening in Washington state, how the virus is spread, and what to do if you have symptoms, please call 1-800-525-0127 and press #. You can also follow DOH & Whatcom County on social media.

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