



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Media Contact: Aly Robinson, Public Information Officer

Phone: (360) 303-9367

E-mail address: WUC\_JIC@co.whatcom.wa.us

## COVID-19 Virus Activity Higher than Ever, Officials Urge Immediate Action

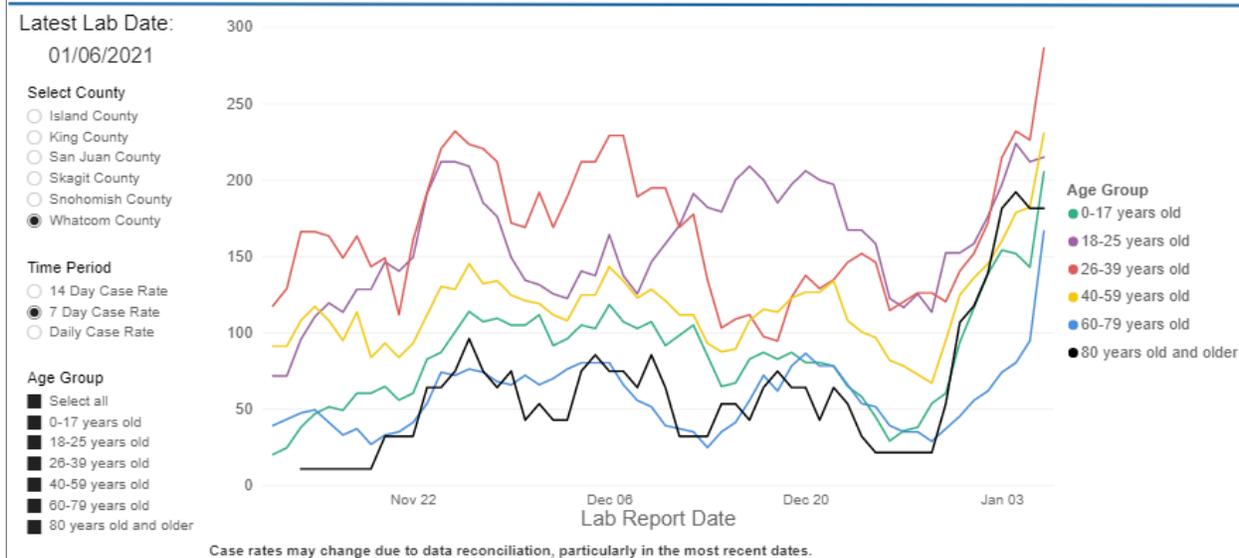
**BELLINGHAM, WA-** Whatcom County has entered new, uncharted and dangerous COVID-19 territory. Since Dec. 30 cases have risen very rapidly, faster than ever before. There's a high risk of the virus spreading even further as people return to work after the holidays. The Whatcom County Health Department advises immediate action to curb the rise in cases.



**This week's seven-day average is twice as high as last week's. Recent days have seen record-high case counts.**

Twice as many cases were reported this week than last, and case counts in recent days far exceeded previously seen daily count records. The virus is more active in Whatcom County now than at any time in the past, including the spring of last year. The rise in cases is consistent across all age groups. After preliminary and ongoing review of case investigations, it appears that the majority of transmission continues to occur in households and at social gatherings.

## Newly confirmed COVID-19 cases per 100,000 people during the prior two weeks, by County and Age



**Every age group is experiencing a steep increase in virus activity.**

Erika Lautenbach, director of the Whatcom County Health Department, said it's imperative for Whatcom County residents to double-down on known preventive measures.

"The steps we need to take are familiar by now," Lautenbach said, "and if we all act immediately, we can stop this viral surge in its tracks."

These measures, Lautenbach said, include wearing a mask whenever around others who aren't from the same household, avoiding gatherings, washing or sanitizing hands frequently, and staying home when experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or after spending any time around others with symptoms. Anyone experiencing symptoms such as a fever, cough or shortness of breath should get tested immediately and stay home from work or school.

"We've said it before and we're saying it again," Lautenbach said, "But this time much more urgently. Now, perhaps more than ever, the actions you take today can save your life and the lives of others. Cancel your plans this weekend."

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