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Media Contacts: Jennifer Moon, Public Information Officer
Whatcom County Health Department
(360) 820-6054
Health-PIO@co.whatcom.wa.us

Bev Mayhew, Senior Director, Marketing and Communications
PeaceHealth
(360) 788-6792
BMayhew@peacehealth.org

Whatcom County Health Department and PeaceHealth Release New Video, Urge Vaccination as Hospitalizations Remain High

BELLINGHAM, WA -- As recent COVID-19 hospitalizations remain high despite falling case rates, the Whatcom County Health Department (WCHD) and PeaceHealth urge Whatcom County residents to get vaccinated as the best way to stay safe from severe cases of COVID-19.

About two out of three Whatcom County residents ages 16 and older have received at least one vaccine dose. The steadily increasing vaccination rate is being reflected in dropping case rates. However, instead of following suit, hospitalization rates are high.

The Whatcom County Health Department has calculated case rates and hospitalization rates for both fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people. Hospitalization rates are based on new admissions of patients for COVID treatment. Between April 3 and May 29, there have been 103 hospitalizations of unvaccinated people, and 1 hospitalization of a fully vaccinated person.

	Cases (14-day rate as of May 29)	Hospitalizations (14-day rate as of May 29)
Fully vaccinated	14 per 100,000	0 per 100,000
Unvaccinated	323 per 100,000	21 per 100,000

“There are a variety of factors that might be contributing to our high overall hospitalization rates, but what we do know is that the vaccines are very effective in protecting people from getting seriously ill from COVID,” said Erika Lautenbach, director of the Whatcom County Health Department. “The best way to keep people from being hospitalized with COVID is to get the vaccine.”

In a new video from WCHD and PeaceHealth, a doctor and a nurse from the PeaceHealth St. Joseph COVID unit emphasize the crucial role of vaccination as they describe their front-line experience in

caring for high numbers of hospitalized people over the past two months. “[Starting in] early April, we saw a surge of very young people, in their 20s and 30s, who are generally healthy and don’t have any other medical problems, who are coming in and becoming very sick from COVID,” said Kelly Matheny, RN.

“As medical providers, it has been difficult to see hospitalized COVID patient numbers ranging between 20 and 31 this past week. We want to see this number go down to zero,” said Chief Medical Officer and Patient Safety Officer Sudhakar Karlapudi, MBBS, MBA, FACP. “This is a preventable disease. The vaccine is free and can prevent others from becoming so ill.”

The video, “Perspectives from PeaceHealth: Vaccinations, Hospitalization, and the Cost of COVID-19,” can be viewed on the [Whatcom County YouTube](#) channel: <https://bit.ly/3gpWQCR>

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