



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Whatcom County Reaches 70% Vaccination Milestone**

**BELLINGHAM, WA --** Today, Whatcom County reached the state target of 70% vaccination against COVID among Whatcom County residents ages 16 and older, becoming the fourth county in Washington to reach that mark, and the second large county (population of 50,000 or more) to do so.

“By working together, Whatcom County has reached this critical milestone for community health and economic recovery,” said Satpal Sidhu, Whatcom County Executive. “We offer our thanks and gratitude to our health care providers who have given over 229,000 doses, our businesses who offered to serve as clinic locations and who provided incentives, and the countless volunteers who stepped up to help with vaccination. This achievement wouldn’t have been possible without them.”

More than 136,000 Whatcom residents aged 12 and up have gotten at least one COVID vaccine dose. “While this is an accomplishment that we should be proud of, our goal is still the same: to get the vaccine to everyone who wants it,” said Erika Lautenbach, director of the Whatcom County Health Department. “Hundreds of residents are getting vaccinated every day to protect themselves and the people they love from COVID, and we hope to see our numbers climb even higher in the months to come.”

“It may feel like the pandemic is over, but highly transmissible variants have been detected in Whatcom County, some associated with more severe disease. They pose a serious risk of COVID for unvaccinated people,” added Dr. Greg Stern, Whatcom County health officer. “It’s especially vital to get both doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines. A single dose appears to be less effective against the Delta variant, but completing the two-dose series provides strong protection.” The Johnson & Johnson vaccine’s effectiveness against the Delta variant is still being studied.

The Health Department urges every eligible person, 12 years old and up, to get vaccinated if they haven’t already. Although we have reached the 70% milestone, we have further to go. Our case rates and hospitalization rates have dropped markedly, but more transmissible variants of the virus are emerging and our community needs higher levels of immunity to keep those rates from rising again.

The vaccines are widely available through drugstores and supermarket pharmacies, as well as from health care providers. To find a vaccine provider, visit [vaccinelocator.doh.wa.gov](http://vaccinelocator.doh.wa.gov) or call 360-778-6075 or 833-VAX-HELP for assistance with making an appointment.

The Health Department will continue to focus on reaching areas and populations under the 70% vaccination threshold, through mobile clinics, local outreach, and collaboration with community partners.

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