



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 24, 2021

Media Contacts: Melissa Morin, Public Information Officer
Whatcom County Health Department
(360) 594-2504
Health-PIO@co.whatcom.wa.us

COVID-19 Testing Demand Increasing

Whatcom Residents Should Make Use of All Testing Options

BELLINGHAM, WA -- With demand for COVID-19 tests increasing, appointments at the drive-through testing site operated in Bellingham by Whatcom County Health Department and Northwest Laboratory continue to fill quickly days in advance. Whatcom County residents and visitors are urged to make use of all local testing options available to them.

People with symptoms of COVID-19 or those who are a close contact of someone with COVID-19 should be tested, regardless of their vaccination status, and follow [current isolation and quarantine guidance](#) while awaiting test results. They can get tested by:

- **Contacting their health care provider** - Health care providers can order COVID-19 tests for their patients through Northwest Laboratory. Often this can be done through a telehealth visit. Once providers order a test, appointments can be made at Northwest Laboratory's drive-through location on Meridian Street in Bellingham. This location requires a health care provider referral and an appointment.
- **Getting tested at one of the many Whatcom County testing locations** - Several health care providers, including urgent care clinics and pharmacies offer COVID-19 tests. Go to www.whatcomcounty.us/covidtesting for a list of testing locations in Whatcom County.
- **Making an appointment at the drive-through [community testing site](#) located at the Bellingham International Airport in Parking Lot A** - This location does not require a separate health care provider referral, but appointments are required. Appointments can be made at www.testdirectly.com. People who do not have a regular health care provider are encouraged to use this site. Close contacts and people with COVID-19 symptoms who have difficulty getting tested through either of the above options may schedule online or call (360) 778-6075 Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Testing demand has increased due to both the current surge in COVID-19 activity and demand for travel-related COVID-19 tests. Many destinations require molecular tests. Molecular testing for travel-related purposes is available:

- **At [many pharmacies](#) in Whatcom County** - Travelers are encouraged to seek travel tests at these locations.

- MORE -

- **By calling Northwest Laboratory’s call center at (360) 543-6904 or using www.testdirectly.com.** The WCHD is unable to schedule or assist with travel-related tests.

As testing demand increases, many people with symptoms of COVID-19 are using at-home tests that are available over-the-counter. At-home tests are usually antigen tests, which produce quick results but are less accurate than molecular (PCR) tests, like those offered at COVID-19 testing sites. People who are symptomatic or have been exposed to COVID-19 who choose to use an at-home COVID-19 test should:

- **Carefully follow the instructions on the test kit.**
- **Get a confirming molecular test at a COVID-19 test location to verify their results.** At-home tests have a higher likelihood of false positives and false negatives.
 - People with symptoms who test negative should confirm their result with a molecular test. If they test positive, they should follow the current isolation guidance.
 - Asymptomatic people who test positive should confirm their result with a molecular test.
- **Report any positive test results.** People who test positive can call the Whatcom County Health Department at 360-778-6190 to report their test result. Reporting positive results from at-home tests helps public health agencies track how and where the disease is spreading.

###