

Feb. 12, 2021

## *A Message from the COVID Safety Team*

Dear staff,

As part of our ongoing work to keep you informed about COVID safety practices and protocols we will be sharing regular updates. Each update will include the latest information from local and regional agencies as well as stories and resources within our district.

**Topics:** COVID testing access every day of the week at Bellingham airport, vaccine update, and CDC recommendations for masks that provide better protection.

Do you have a COVID-19 topic you want to learn about? [Email us!](#)

## Whatcom County data and updates

- On February 11 Governor Inslee moved our region, Whatcom, Skagit and Island Counties, to phase 2. Read the [WA State Phase descriptions](#).
- [Starting February 15, you can get tested at the Bellingham airport seven days a week.](#) The testing site is open from noon to 3 p.m. and 4 to 7 p.m. Testing through the Bellingham location does not require a doctor's order. You can schedule by going to [TestDirectly.com/whatcom](#). This option has testing appointments already available for next week.
- Below are the case rates for Whatcom County per 100,000 residents. Check the [Whatcom County Health Department Data Dashboard](#) for more information.

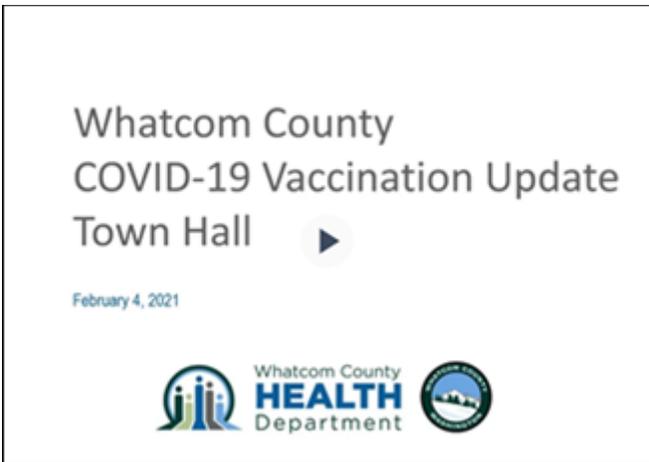
• Complete data	• Jan 18-Jan 31	• 329.3
• Preliminary data	• Jan 27-Feb 9	• 295.6

- Sign up for [WA Notify](#), a tool that works through smartphones, without sharing any personal information, to alert users if they may have been exposed to COVID-19. It is completely private and does not know or track who you are or where you go.

## Vaccine Update

### **Watch video: vaccine town hall**

The Whatcom County Health Department and local providers PeaceHealth, Family Care Network, Sea Mar, and Unity Care NW held a [40-minute vaccine update townhall on Feb. 4](#). Local providers shared their preparations and ability to host large-scale vaccination clinics and drive-throughs and their frustration with low and variable supply. The health department answered questions sent in by community members. The first half includes information from health providers and the second half includes a Q&A



### Vaccines for BPS Staff

District staff are working with local providers to connect eligible A1, A2 and B1 staff to schedule vaccination appointments. Our roles in this effort are mainly as an intermediary to make sure that eligible staff get connected to vaccine opportunities and as ongoing advocates for expanded vaccine access to the community. To make sure you know when you are eligible please visit [WA Phase Finder](#) and find vaccine locations by checking: [Vaccine Locations :: Washington State Department of Health](#). Scroll down to Whatcom County for a list and links to scheduling appointments.

### Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Mask Research

In our [COVID safety update on Feb. 4](#) we included a section on variants and masking. Masks are essential to limiting spread of COVID-19 and increased layers of masks will increase protection. On Feb. 10, the [CDC released research on increased efficacy of masks by layering and fit](#). The Washington state Department of Health has not made any changes to their guidance.

Note that in the recommendations below, they say not to double mask a KN95 or any disposable masks; a single snug fitting KN95 OR a procedural mask with a cloth face mask on top are two examples of variations that increase effectiveness.

- [Let us know](#) if you have needs or questions about masks or PPE.
- Check out these tips from the CDC: [Improve How Your Mask Protects You](#)

#### Two important ways to make sure your mask works the best it can

1

**Make sure your mask fits snugly against your face.** Gaps can let air with respiratory droplets leak in and out around the edges of the mask

2

**Pick a mask with layers to keep your respiratory droplets in and others' out.** A mask with layers will stop more respiratory droplets getting inside your mask or escaping from your mask if you are sick.



## Do



### Choose a mask with a **Nose Wire**

- A nose wire is a metal strip along the top of the mask
- Nose wires prevent air from leaking out of the top of the mask.
- Bend the nose wire over your nose to fit close to your face.



### Use a **Mask Fitter or Brace**

- Use a mask fitter or brace over a disposable mask or a cloth mask to prevent air from leaking around the edges of the mask.



### Check that it **Fits Snugly** over your nose, mouth, and chin

- Check for gaps by cupping your hands around the outside edges of the mask.
- Make sure no air is flowing from the area near your eyes or from the sides of the mask.
- If the mask has a good fit, you will feel warm air come through the front of the mask and may be able to see the mask material move in and out with each breath.



### Add **Layers** of material

#### 2 ways to layer

- Use a cloth mask that has multiple layers of fabric.
- Wear one disposable mask underneath a cloth mask.
  - The second mask should push the edges of the inner mask against your face.

### Make sure you can see and breathe easily



### **Knot and Tuck** ear loops of a 3-ply mask

- Knot the ear loops of a 3-ply face mask where they join the edge of the mask
- Fold and tuck the unneeded material under the edges
- For video instructions, see: <https://youtu.be/UANi8Cc71A0> 

## Do NOT



### Combine two disposable masks

- Disposable masks are not designed to fit tightly and wearing more than one will not improve fit



### Combine a KN95 mask with any other mask.

- Only use one KN95 mask at a time.