

PRESS RELEASE

Date: July 28, 2021

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Areas with High Levels of Community Transmission Should Mask Indoors

Kittitas County has a high level of community transmission, and everyone should consider wearing a mask while indoors regardless of vaccine status. Since early July, Kittitas County's COVID-19 caseload has been increasing and the increase is continuing. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), everyone should mask indoors in areas with high levels of transmission. Level of community transmission can be found at <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>.

Vaccines are still considered incredibly effective. It is only the high transmission areas where individuals are being asked to mask indoors. Why? Because when individuals are around a lot of people with more disease present, there is a higher chance that someone who is fully vaccinated will still get sick (also called vaccine breakthrough). Masking is an extra defense step to protect individuals in addition to the vaccine. "We want people to avoid getting COVID-19 altogether if they can," states Health Officer Dr. Mark Larson, "so the masking is an extra step to achieve that during high transmission times."

According to the Washington State Department of Health, only 42.3% of the population in Kittitas County is fully vaccinated against COVID-19. High levels of individuals who are vaccinated decrease transmission rates. Vaccines also lessen the severity of a disease, even with vaccine breakthrough.

The Kittitas County Public Health Department encourages everyone to be vaccinated. Please visit www.doh.wa.gov and use the vaccine locator to find a vaccine near you. Please also be aware of transmission levels (via the CDC's link for COVID-19 data) and consider how you can best protect yourself.

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