



ADAMS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Public Health Recommendations for COVID-19

March 12, 2020

At least 12 of Washington State's 39 counties are now reporting COVID-19 cases, including nearby Grant County. There is significant spread in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. As of 10 a.m. on March 12 there have been 29 deaths. There are almost certainly cases already in our communities, though they may be mild or non-symptomatic cases that are invisible yet still able to infect others. **We do not yet have lab-confirmed cases in Adams County.**

Almost all of us will get through this just fine, but there will be a significant number of deaths among the elderly and other high risk groups. The time to get serious about every available preventive measure is right now, today. Failure to do so will result in more death among neighbors and relatives, even though most of us will come through OK. To save as many precious lives as we can, WE NEED EACH OTHER.

On March 11, 2020, Governor Inslee issued a Proclamation to minimize COVID-19 (Coronavirus) exposure, particularly in counties hit hardest by the virus. Starting March 11, 2020, *events that take place in King, Snohomish, and Pierce counties with more than 250 people are prohibited by the state.* This order applies to gathering for social, spiritual, and recreational activities. This includes but is not limited to: community, civic, public, leisure, faith-based, or sporting events; parades; concerts; festivals; conventions; fundraisers and similar activities.

"This is an unprecedented public health situation and we can't wait until we're in the middle of it to slow it down. We've got to get ahead of the curve. One main defense is to reduce the interaction of people in our lives." – Governor Inslee

Today, Adams County Health Department is encouraging residents of our county to **voluntarily follow these urgent recommendations** to minimize exposure to COVID-19 for our residents and to lessen the impact it has on our communities.

- **People over age 60, those with major chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease or respiratory problems, and pregnant women are urged to stay home as much as possible in the coming weeks to minimize exposure to the virus.**
- **Your local health department firmly urges the cancellation of in-person group events of any size, and especially the larger ones with over 20 participants, for the foreseeable future.**
- **If you absolutely must hold a group event of any size, contrary to the advice of public health experts everywhere, do all you can to minimize participation by high risk people and minimize contact among participants by maintaining a separation of at least 6 feet among them so far as possible. People with fever of 100.4 degrees or higher and with a cough should be asked to stay home.**

- Anyone staying home from work, cancelling events, or modifying business operations to minimize this epidemic is **doing their civic duty** and should be sustained as well as possible by the rest of us. Employers should consider continued compensation when possible, along with all other measures to sustain those temporarily laid off. We urge all community groups – including social service organizations, faith-based organizations, schools and PTOs, and others – to take the initiative right now to organize efforts to sustain high risk and laid-off people with whom you are associated, with food and household supplies. Financial institutions should implement all possible policies easing debt, mortgage deadlines, and related obligations for the duration of this pandemic.

We have carefully weighed the risks and benefits of this recommendation. These actions are the most effective tools we have available to help prevent the spread of the virus in our communities and protect our vulnerable residents.

Alternatives

If you are planning an event or gathering, please consider the following alternatives:

- Utilize available technology options (e.g. livestreaming, virtual meetings), or
- Cancel or postpone the event until these recommendations have been lifted

If you have plans to attend an upcoming event or gathering, we encourage you not attend to protect yourself, your family, and the people you come in contact with on a daily basis.

Any size gathering that does occur should ensure the following:

- Older adults and individuals with chronic medical conditions are strongly encouraged not to attend
- Recommendations for social distancing and limiting close contact are met
- Employees or volunteers leading an event are screened for symptoms each day
- Proper hand washing, sanitation, and cleaning is readily available
- Environmental cleaning guidelines are followed (e.g., clean and disinfect high touch surfaces daily or more frequently)

Schools

There is a lot of speculation about school closures. Experts at our State Department of Health are working with local and national experts along with CDC to use the best available models to predict the many effects and problems from school closures. One thing that is clear is that closures are less effective when taken too early in an outbreak, and when delayed until it peaks.

That is why school closures have not been widely ordered by public officials so far. We may get there, but we are not there yet. Any school officials who make the decision to close in the meantime, after considering the unique circumstances of each school district, should be supported for doing everything possible to help protect our community. However, **schools should take steps now to prepare for the possibility of prolonged mandatory closures.**

In particular, schools should plan for how to continue to provide non-educational supports for their students such as providing food, developmental disability supports, and school-based healthcare.

Collective action can save lives

We all have people in our lives who are high-risk. We all are one mishap away from needing access to a functioning hospital. We all have a lot at stake.

Giving up social events will not be easy, and the impacts on businesses and jobs may be significant. But this is our best chance to save lives. It is in support of the most vulnerable in our community, and a protection for everyone.

The more united we can be in preventing the spread – be in this together – the greater the benefit for the whole community.

Community Wide Measures

This is becoming a community crisis and we are all in it together. Please do your part, because it will make a difference in the number of cases and deaths we ultimately have in our communities. Anything we can do to delay cases will also help our health care providers care for us by making it more feasible to manage the severe demands they will face.

There are five basic community-wide actions that can be taken by everyone to prevent disease spread. They should be done now – as broadly and consistently as possible. These interventions include:

- Increase handwashing and use of alcohol-based sanitizer
- Improved respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette
- Enhanced social distancing (keep at least 6 feet distance between yourself and others)
- Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch and common surfaces
- Stay home when you are sick and stay away from others who are sick

COVID-19 Resources:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

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