Yakima Health District

Media Release

COVID-19 Activity in Yakima County is High

Yakima, WA— We must continue to prioritize the health of our community. Across Washington State, COVID-19 is hitting the residents and especially the vulnerable communities of Yakima County, the hardest. Our essential workforce, the ones who provide the services we need as a community, and our residents at high risk for severe infection need all of us to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in Yakima County. If not ourselves, we each have family members, neighbors, friends and coworkers who are at high risk of being hospitalized or dying from this infection. We are sacrificing their safety and lives by moving forward while there is so much infection in the community

The Yakima Health District's goal is to ensure that we can open our economy back up **as soon as is safely possible.** We are not there yet. As of today, the rate of COVID-19 in Yakima County (669 cases per 100,000) is over 2 times higher than the rest of the state (251.38 cases per 100,000). In some areas, the rate is almost 5 times higher (1,200 cases per 100,000).

Yakima County in Phase 1 of "Safe Start"

The Yakima Health District does not support stay-home orders to be modified on a city-by-city basis. The Yakima Health District intends to follow Governor Inslee's lead in the "Safe Start" phased approach. Yakima County, like the rest of Washington State, is in Phase 1.

As the Yakima Health District receives concerns from the community regarding activities inconsistent with Phase 1, such as restaurants providing dine-in services, the Yakima Health District will reach out to provide education and support to businesses around safety practices.

Dine in-services put the customers at risk and the employees at risk of COVID-19 infection. It is critically important now for people to wear masks while around others and will continue to be necessary for months to come. People can't eat a meal with a mask on. There should be no dining on the premises of any restaurant or other food vendors at this time.

"Herd Immunity" and COVID-19

The idea of getting people sick intentionally so they can become infected with COVID-19 is dangerous. Currently, there is no scientific evidence that you can build herd immunity to COVID-19. Advocating for herd immunity at this point in time would not only risk many lives unnecessarily but would put our entire healthcare system at extreme risk.

Even if herd immunity was possible, that would require that approximately 70% of our population will need to be infected in a short amount of time. Currently general estimates show

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a [5% community prevalence](#). Having thousands of individuals get infected with COVID-19 at the same time will overwhelm our health care system and hundreds of our friends and family members will die. Not just from COVID-19, but from other serious conditions for which our hospitals may not be able to provide care if full, such as heart attacks and strokes. Our initial goal was to not overwhelm the health system, and so far we have been successful, but as we continue to watch our hospital beds and intensive care units fill over the past several weeks we must all continue to follow public health recommendations in order to prevent our health system from being overwhelmed.

"It is not only high-risk folks who die from COVID-19 and low risk folks are the ones who unknowingly shared infection with each of our deceased high-risk Yakima County residents. So, if you are a low-risk individual, getting sick from COVID-19 may or may not kill you. But it can certainly kill others." Dr. Teresa Everson, Health Officer, Yakima Health District.

We must continue to ensure to stay at home as much as possible, maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from others, wear a face mask if going out in public, wash hands frequently and sanitize surfaces frequently.

Additional Information:
["Safe Start" Road to Recovery Plan](#)

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