



Yakima Health District

Media Release

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Contact: Lilián Bravo, Director of Public Health Partnerships

509-930-4787

Yakima County Hospitals Are Currently Exceeding Capacity

YAKIMA, WA- As of last night Virginia Mason Memorial had no intensive care or non-intensive care beds available. There were multiple patients waiting for hospital bed space overnight. This was after at least 17 patients had already been transferred out of the county. Several individuals are still currently waiting for available bed space.

Across Yakima County, there were 61 COVID-19 positive individuals hospitalized, the highest we have seen to date. Over the past week, all hospitals have reported critical staffing shortages. Many of these shortages are due to staff being out for either having COVID-19, demonstrating COVID-19 symptoms or because they are a close contact to a COVID-19 individual and are now under quarantine.

Not only do we have the highest rate of COVID-19 infections, but as of last night, Yakima County represented 22% (61 of 242) of all hospitalized COVID-19 patients in Washington State. This was more than King County, the most populous county in Washington State. Yakima County COVID-19 patients also represented 24% (11 of 46) of all ventilated COVID-19 patients in the State, which is the same as King County.

Nearby, the Benton and Franklin Counties health care system is also reaching capacity. “Benton and Franklin Counties are seeing a steady, rapid increase in hospitalizations due to COVID-19, with the number of patients nearly doubling the past two weeks. While hospitals are not overwhelmed yet, if the rate continues, we will exceed capacity quickly.” Said Malvina Goodwin, Benton-Franklin Health District.

Yakima County cannot continue to rely on other counties to absorb patients that need additional intensive care. As our case counts continue to spike after large celebratory weekends, we are seeing hospitalizations also sharply increase shortly after. The entire health care system in Yakima County is exceeding capacity.

Today, as of 3PM we have already seen an increase of 180, one of the largest single day increases of COVID-19 positive cases to date. These numbers will likely be higher when we finish reporting later this evening.

PUBLIC HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Stay at home as much as possible**
- Avoid close contact with anyone outside of your household
- If you must go out, ensure at least 6 feet of distance from others and wear a mask
- Wash hands frequently and sanitize common surfaces frequently
- If you have a fever, cough, shortness of breath, fever, muscle pain, headache, sore throat or new loss of taste or smell, get tested for COVID-19 within 24 hours. For testing locations, call 2-1-1.
- If you have any symptoms of illness, stay at home and isolate except to get tested. Make sure those you have been in close contact with know they need to quarantine.

QUOTES

Yakima Health District:

“As Father’s Day approaches, we urge community members to demonstrate their love and affection for their family by ensuring that they are safe. Any close contact with people outside of your immediate household is putting yourself and your loved ones at risk. ” said Andre Fresco, Executive Director of the Yakima Health District.



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“This is the day we have been fighting to avoid for months, when our hospitals can no longer provide their highest level of care because they are overwhelmed caring for patients with severe COVID-19 infection. We have a choice to make today- whether we continue to do what we have been for the last three months and keep watching our neighbors get sick and our local healthcare system break down; or whether we commit to keeping each other safe and healing our healthcare system by avoiding close contact with those outside of our households and masking when we do need to be out. We need to stop having in-person parties, barbecues, large family gatherings, celebrations, and happy hours and figure out how to connect with each other virtually. These adjustments have been made all over the world and have been proven to work to slow the spread of COVID-19. We need to do the same in Yakima and we need to do it now, to ensure the safety of our families. As a community, we have no choice but to come together to protect Yakima County. We must take immediate action to stop the spread of COVID-19 and ensure that we can provide complex medical care needs to our sick community members. Not just those with COVID-19, but those needing care for any severe illness or injury. We cannot allow our friends and neighbors to die waiting for space at the hospital or waiting to be transferred to another hospital” said Dr. Teresa Everson, Health Officer of the Yakima Health District.

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