

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 6/1/2021

TO: Grant County healthcare providers, infection control staff, supervisory nursing staff, clinic management, school nurses.
Grant County Emergency Management
Grant County Media

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT

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Health Officer Encourages Continued Masking in Grant County

COVID Rates Slow to Drop. Vaccination Rates Gradually Improving. Guidance will be reassessed weekly

Grant County, WA – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently issued new guidance that relaxed the use of masks and social distancing for individuals who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. People are considered to be fully vaccinated:

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines
- 2 weeks after a single dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine.

In spite of this guidance from CDC, the Grant County Health Officer and the Grant County Health District (GCHD) staff recommend that, at least for the next 4 weeks, **masks should continue to be worn by everyone in Grant County, including by those who are fully vaccinated, in all indoor spaces and in outdoor spaces where distancing cannot be assured.** Social distancing of 6 feet is also still recommended as the safest practice. **This guidance will be reassessed by the Health Officer weekly and additional information provided depending on changes in COVID activity in Grant County.**

Reasons why we continue recommending masking for everyone:

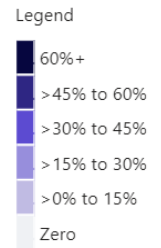
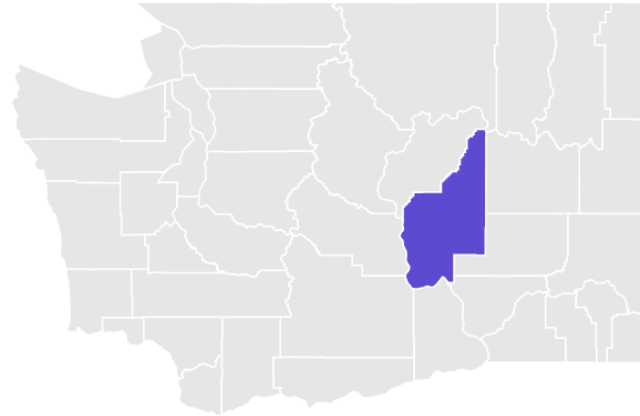
- Our vaccination rates are low, but improving (goal is to have 70% of those eligible fully vaccinated);
- Even though COVID vaccine does not provide 100% protection, an overwhelming majority (>95%) of those becoming ill with COVID in Grant County are not vaccinated;
- Regional hospitalization rates due to COVID and ICU use remain high;
- Rates of COVID-19 in Grant County are dropping slowly, while remaining above 200 cases per 2 weeks;
- We are concerned about continued high rate of hospitalizations and ICU use for COVID and non-COVID patients;
- COVID-19 cases in Grant County caused by more infectious variants, including B117 (UK), B1429 (California) and P1 (Brazil), are affecting younger individuals and have been responsible for more sickness and hospitalizations;
- There is no practical way to determine who is vaccinated and who is not; low vaccination increases risk;

Considering our current COVID indicators and the pandemic's behavior in Grant County, it is prudent to continue masking. We trust that our residents and visitors continue masking and vaccinating. Improving vaccination rates will make removing restrictions and recommendations about masking easier.

Please let's continue our efforts of bringing COVID rates and hospitalization down in Grant County!

Percent of Total Population Initiating Vaccination	35.81%
Percent of Total Population Fully Vaccinated	30.65%
Percent of Population Initiating Vaccination (16+)	48.35%
Percent of Population Fully Vaccinated (16+)	41.38%

TOTAL POPULATION INITIATING VACCINATION (RECEIVING AT LEAST 1 DOSE)



WA State Labor and Industries has also released new guidance and enforcement policies for employers and workers. These require masking in all workplaces or checking vaccination status.

Department of Labor and Industries Masking and Distancing Requirements:

file:///I:/Coronavirus%202019-20/DOH%20%20and%20other%20Guidance/LNI_F414-179-000Mask.Distancing.5.21.pdf

COVID-19 Prevention in the Workplace:

<https://lni.wa.gov/forms-publications/F414-164-000.pdf>

COVID-19 Workplace Safety and Health Requirements: *Governor’s Proclamation Overview*

<https://lni.wa.gov/forms-publications/F414-169-000.pdf>

Temporary Enforcement Guidance: Updated May 21, 2021 (*pg 5-6-Vaccinated Workers*)

<https://www.lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-rules/enforcement-policies/DD1180.pdf>

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