



Media Advisory

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Contact: Lilian Bravo, Director of Public Health Partnerships

509.930.4787

A Letter from the Health Officer: Yakima County Residents, Enjoy Yakima *Safely*

To Yakima County residents,

As a community, Yakima has worked diligently to follow the public health recommendations and we have seen our cases drop significantly over the past several months. For this reason, we have been able to slowly re-open businesses and even begin to plan for in-person learning.

We all must remember that as businesses and other activities slowly re-open, this not because the COVID-19 pandemic is “over.”- This is being done because our metrics show that our community has been taking public health recommendations seriously. We continue to see our community members practice social distancing of at least 6 feet, wearing masks in public, keeping their social circle small, conducting activities outdoors when possible rather than indoors, and striving to take care of one another.

Unfortunately, there are conflicting messages currently circulating that we can all “go back to normal,” and this is unfortunately not true. There are plenty of examples demonstrating how quickly COVID-19 can resurge in a community when public health recommendations are not followed.

Let’s continue to do what we have been doing – it’s been working. We went from having the worst COVID-19 numbers in the state and across the West Coast to being a model of what we can be accomplished when we all work together. If we mistakenly believe that we have “beaten” COVID-19, before a vaccine is readily available – we will be on track to go back to where we used to be.

As we all begin to revisit our favorite restaurants, enjoy more time together outdoors, and enjoy the other additional activities now permitted in our current phase of the Safe Start Plan, please remember the following to make an educated decision on what risk you are willing to take for yourself and your community:

- If you are feeling sick - stay home. Reschedule your plans or opt for a web-based get-together like ZOOM or Face Time.
- Continue to wear your mask in public places and when you are unable to maintain 6 feet of physical distance from others not in your household.
- Frequently wash your hands for 20 seconds and have hand sanitizer available when going to public places or enjoying the outdoors.
- Enjoy *outdoor* gatherings or celebrations with 5 or fewer people outside of your home per week. Remember to wear a mask and wash your hands frequently when gathering with others.
- Set up children’s activities that do not require physical contact like going for a walk, riding bikes, jumping rope, or coloring.
- Call your favorite restaurant, winery, or brewery ahead of time to see if reservations are required and to be aware of indoor seating capacity. If weather permits, choose outdoor seating instead. If the capacity has been reached, whether its enforced or not, considering going elsewhere where the risk is lower.
- Continue to seek updated information and guidance from objective sources such as the Yakima Health District and the Washington State Department of Health – other sources may not present the full information needed to accurately judge risk in the community, including the measures of community safety used by our state public health experts to determine our readiness to move forward.

We can and should enjoy Yakima, by following the safety precautions to ensure we can continue to see further declines in our numbers and move towards a path of further reopening. Remember, more people = more risk, indoor is higher risk than outdoor, and less space is higher risk than more space.

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