

HEALTH MATTERS

Promoting better health for a stronger community



ISLAND COUNTY'S emergency orders will sunset on Oct. 31, in conjunction with Gov. Jay Inslee's end to remaining COVID-19 proclamations.

Island County sunsetting local state of emergency

Vote aligns with Inslee's Oct. 31 end to COVID-19 proclamations

The Island County Board of Commissioners this week voted to sunset the local declaration of a state of emergency that was created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Oct. 11 vote follows Washington state Gov.

Jay Inslee's Sept. 8 announcement that he was ending all remaining COVID-19 emergency proclamations by Oct. 31. Inslee declared a state of emergency on Feb. 29, 2020 in

See **SUNSET**, page 2



ISLAND COUNTY COVID Response Team, which distributed thousands of home tests into the community, will stand down by year's end.

SUNSET: *Island County COVID Response to stand down by Dec. 31*

Continued from page 1

response to COVID-19. The Island County commissioners adopted its own state of emergency on March 2, 2020.

In their motion Tuesday, the commissioners stated, "COVID-19 is anticipated to be prevalent in the population for years to come, and the county will continue to work to avoid and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 as it does other diseases through the efforts of Island County Public Health."

As of Oct. 31, Island County's local state of emergency is no longer in force and effect, the board of commissioners declared.

With passage of the commissioners' resolution, the Island County COVID Response Team will stand down on or before Dec. 31.

The COVID Response Team promoted COVID-19 vacci-

nations and boosters and conducted vaccination clinics early in the pandemic. More recently, the team has conducted testing for COVID-19 and empowered local businesses and government agencies to successfully respond to COVID-19 cases and outbreaks.

During comments Tuesday, Board of Commissioners Chair Melanie Bacon noted the relatively low numbers of COVID cases and deaths in comparison with other parts of the state and country.

Even though the emergency orders are going away, people should remain diligent in taking measures to prevent getting sick from COVID-19 and spreading the virus.

Measures include keeping current on all vaccinations and boosters, washing hands with soap and water frequently, sanitizing hard surfaces and staying home if you feel ill, according to Island County COVID Response officials.



A STUDY conducted by Health and Human Services shows that the federal COVID-19 vaccination program was highly effective.

HHS report: Federal COVID-19 vaccination program saved lives

A new report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services shows that the federal vaccination program is linked to more than 650,000 fewer COVID-19 hospitalizations and more than 300,000 fewer deaths among seniors and other Americans enrolled in Medicare.

The federal program is credited with getting more than 90 percent of seniors fully vaccinated and over 70 percent of seniors a booster shot.

The study, conducted by researchers with HHS's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, underscores the importance of Americans – particularly seniors and others at high-risk of serious outcomes – getting an updated COVID-19 vaccine this fall.

"This report reaffirms what we have said all along: COVID-19 vaccines save

lives and prevent hospitalizations," said HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra. "We now have updated COVID vaccines designed to protect you against the omicron strain of COVID that makes up almost all COVID cases in the U.S."

"The Biden-Harris Administration has ensured that updated vaccines are available at tens of thousands of locations nationwide," Becerra said. "Over 90 percent of Americans live within 5 miles of where they can access these vaccines for free. I urge everyone eligible to get an updated COVID vaccine to protect yourself ahead of the fall and winter."

The Oct. 7 report reflects the benefits that the COVID-19 vaccines have had on seniors and the economy, according to an HHS news release. In addition to the reductions in severe

COVID-19 health outcomes, reductions in COVID-19 hospitalizations were associated with savings of more than \$16 billion in direct medical costs.

All racial and ethnic groups and all 50 states experienced reduced numbers of COVID-19 deaths and hospitalizations linked to vaccination, highlighting the importance of achieving high levels of vaccinations in the US to save lives.

Recently, the Food and Drug Administration authorized, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended the use of an updated COVID-19 vaccine designed for the omicron variant most prevalent in the U.S.

The bivalent/updated COVID-19 vaccine is now available. Contact your family practitioner or a local pharmacy to schedule your booster.

Island County screening rate ahead of state percentage

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a good time to renew focus on taking steps to prevent one of the most common cancers that affects women.

Other than skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer among women.

Each year in the United States, according to the CDC, about 264,000 women get breast cancer and 42,000 women die from the disease.

Men also get breast cancer, but it is not very common. About one out of every 100 breast cancers diagnosed in the United States is found in a man.

In Island County, 79 percent of women ages 50-74 reported that, during 2020, they had received a mammogram. That compares to 75 percent of women ages 50-74 statewide.

This screening rate falls behind the U.S. Healthy People 2030 Goal of 84.30%. [The Assessment & Healthy Communities chronic disease dashboard](#) shares information about local screening for breast cancer.

In Whatcom, San Juan, Island, Skagit, and Snohomish counties, the breast cancer rate is 156 per 100,000 people, just below the Washington state rate of 164 per 100,000.

According to the American Cancer Society, when breast cancer is detected early, and is in the localized stage, the five-year relative survival rate is 99%.

According to the CDC, mammograms are the best way to find breast cancer early, when it is easier to treat and before it is big enough to cause symptoms.

What Are the Symptoms?

There are different symptoms of breast cancer, and some people have no symptoms at all. According to the CDC, symptoms may include:

- Any change in the size or shape of the breast.
- Pain in any area of the breast.
- Nipple discharge other than breast milk (including



blood).

- A new lump in the breast or underarm.

The American Cancer Society notes that most of the changes or lumps women find in their breasts are not cancerous, according to Dr. Shawn Morris, community and family health manager for Island County Public Health.

What is Breast Cancer Screening?

Breast cancer screening refers to checking a woman's breasts for cancer before there are signs or symptoms of disease, Morris explained.

All women need to discuss the different screening options with their health care provider to take an individualized approach.

Talking about the benefits and risks of screening to decide with your health care provider about the approach is called shared decision making. Appropriate breast cancer screening helps find breast cancer early when it is easier to treat, he said.

Mammograms: What to Expect

A mammogram is an X-ray picture of the breast. A doctor will look at the X-ray for early signs of breast cancer or other problems. If it is abnormal, do not panic. An abnormal mammogram does not always mean that there is cancer. You will need additional tests before the doctor can tell for sure.

See **AWARENESS**, page 5

AWARENESS:

Take steps to detect, prevent breast cancer

Continued from page 4

Who should get screened for Breast Cancer?

- Women ages 50 and over.
- The American Cancer Society recommends women 45 and older get a mammogram annually.
- Women with a family history of breast cancer should talk to their healthcare provider about their risk and when to start screening.
- Breast cancer can occur in men, but it is about 100 times less common among men than among women. Screening is not routinely recommended.

Prevention Steps

Studies show that your risk for breast cancer is due to a variety of different factors. Having a risk factor does not mean you will get the disease, and not all risk factors have the same effect. The risk for breast cancer increases with age, and women who have inherited changes to certain genes, such as BRCA1 and BRCA2, are at higher risk of breast cancer. If you have risk factors, talk with your doctor about ways you can lower your risk and about screening.

According to the CDC and the American Cancer Society, you can take evidence-based lifestyle steps to help lower your breast cancer risk, including:

- **Keep a healthy weight and exercise regularly.**

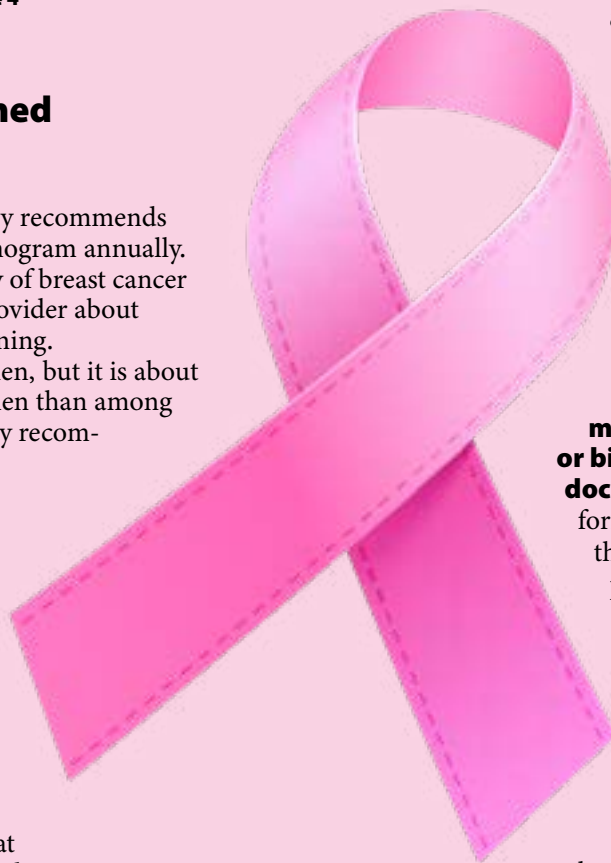
There's growing evidence that regular physical activity decreases breast cancer risk, particularly for women after menopause. This may be because of exercise or body weight, inflammation, and hormone balance. The American Cancer Society recommends that adults get 150 to 300 minutes of moderately intense exercise or 75 to 150 minutes of vigorous activity each week. Being overweight or obese after menopause is a known breast cancer risk.

After menopause, most estrogen in the body comes from adipose (fat) tissue and increased adipose tissue can raise estrogen levels.

Women who are overweight may also have higher blood insulin levels, the hormone that helps balance blood sugars but can cause inflammation if chronically elevated.

Higher circulating estrogen and insulin levels have been linked to cancer risk, including breast cancer.

A nutritious diet that promotes balanced blood sugars can help lower insulin and estrogen from adipose tissues.



- **Choose not to drink alcohol, or drink alcohol in moderation.** Risk increases with the amount of alcohol intake. For instance, women who have 1 drink per day have a relatively small increased risk (about 7% - 10%) compared to those who don't drink, while women who have 2 to 3 drinks per day have about a 20% increased risk.

- **If you are taking hormone replacement therapy or birth control pills, ask your doctor about the risks.**

Some forms of hormone replacement therapy taken during menopause can raise the risk for breast cancer when taken for more than five years, according to the CDC.

While the CDC notes that certain oral birth control pills also have been found to raise risk, it's best to talk with your healthcare provider about risks vs benefits to develop an individualized approach to family planning.

- **Studies suggest that breastfeeding** may slightly lower breast cancer risk, with greater prevention if breastfeeding continues for over one year. However, this factor is hard to study, particularly in the U.S., where breastfeeding this long is uncommon.

Should cancer patients, survivors get a flu shot?

Yes, according to the CDC. Injectable flu shots are approved for use in people with cancer and other health conditions.

Flu shots have a long, established safety record in people with cancer.

It is also important for people who live with or care for cancer patients to be vaccinated against seasonal flu to reduce the risk of getting the cancer patient sick.

There are things you should know to understand what breast cancer is, know your chances for getting it, and how to find it early. Finding breast cancer early is critical because when it is found early, it is easier to treat. Read to learn more about the common symptoms of breast cancer and the best way many women find breast cancer early.

What is breast cancer?

Breast cancer is the second most common cancer among women, after skin cancer. It is a disease in which cells in the breast grow out of control.

Cancer cells can also spread, or *metastasize*, to other parts of the body.



What symptoms should I look for?

Some warning signs of breast cancer are:

- New lump in the breast or underarm (armpit).
- Thickening or swelling of part of the breast.
- Irritation or dimpling of breast skin.
- Redness or flaky skin in the nipple area or the breast.
- Pulling in of the nipple.
- Nipple discharge other than breast milk, including blood.
- Any change in the size or shape of the breast.
- Pain in the breast.

These symptoms can happen with other conditions that are not cancer. If you notice any of these symptoms, talk to your health care provider right away.

What can I do to find breast cancer early?

Breast cancer screening involves checking a woman's breasts for cancer before there are signs or symptoms of the disease.

A *mammogram* is an X-ray picture of the breast. Doctors use a mammogram to look for early signs of breast cancer. The United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends that most women who are at average risk and are 50 to 74 years old get one every 2 years. USPSTF recommendations state that women with a parent, sibling, or child with breast cancer are at a higher risk for breast cancer and may benefit from beginning screening in their 40s. Weighing the benefits and risks of screening is important when considering your screening options. If you're 40 to 49 years old, talk to your health care provider about when to start screening.



Are you concerned that you cannot afford to have a mammogram?

Most health insurance plans cover the cost of screening mammograms. If you have a low income or do not have insurance, you may qualify for a free or low-cost mammogram through CDC's National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program.



National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program

To learn more about the program, call (800) CDC-INFO or visit www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp/.

What can I do to lower my chance of getting breast cancer?

One of the most important things you can do to lower your risk of breast cancer is to know your risk of breast cancer. Talk to your doctor about what that means for you.

Your doctor will consider factors that **cannot** be changed, like:

- Your personal history of breast problems.
- Your family's history of breast cancer.
- Your breast density (the amount of connective and fatty tissue in your breasts).
- Your age. Most breast cancers are found after age 50.
- Your menstrual and childbirth history.
- Your history of radiation treatment therapy to the chest or breasts.
- If you took the drug diethylstilbestrol (DES), which was given to some pregnant women in the United States between 1940 and 1971 to prevent miscarriage, you have a higher risk. Women whose mothers took DES while pregnant with them are also at higher risk.
- If you or close family members have known mutations (changes) in your breast cancer genes (BRCA1 or BRCA2). Women who have inherited these genetic changes are at higher risk of breast and ovarian cancer. You will only know if you have a mutation if you have had genetic testing. Even in the absence of having abnormal genes when tested, it is important to know your family history; we don't know all the genes that cause breast cancer.

Your doctor will also consider factors that **can** be changed, like any hormone replacement use.

Here are some things you can do to reduce your chance of getting breast cancer:

- Keep a healthy weight.
- Engage in regular physical activity.
- Don't drink alcohol, or limit alcoholic drinks to no more than one per day.



To learn more about breast cancer, visit www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/.



TRANSMISSION OF *bird flu to humans is unlikely, but preventative steps can reduce the risk of spreading the virus.*

Officials: Uptick expected in avian flu cases in wild birds this fall

Preventative steps can stop spread to domestic flocks

With the [fall migration](#) underway across the nation, the Washington State Department of Agriculture is preparing for an uptick in bird flu cases.

Veterinarians are predicting newly infected wild birds will join the already infected, resident wild waterfowl populations, increasing the risk of transmission to backyard flocks such as chickens, ducks and geese.

With 34 flocks infected this year, state officials at the [state Department of Agriculture](#) are urging bird owners to continue their dedication to [enhanced biosecurity efforts](#).

State Veterinarian Dr. Amber Itle said that flock owners should focus this fall on keeping wild waterfowl away from domestic birds.

The best way to protect flocks, she explained, is to stay “S.A.F.E.”

- **Self-report** high numbers of sick or dead birds and [report the health of your birds](#) if located nearby an infected flock.
- **Avoid contact** with migratory waterfowl.
- **Fence birds** out of shared water sources/ponds.
- **Eliminate outdoor feeders**, espe-

cially at night.

In addition to the added safety measures, flock owners can use the domestic sick bird online reporting tool to report sick or dead domestic birds online. The online tool complements the existing state Agriculture sick bird reporting hotline, as well as the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s [online reporting tool](#) for wild birds.

In Island County, just two cases of bird flu among wild birds have been

See **BIRD FLU**, page 9

BIRD FLU: *Uptick in cases expected this fall*

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reported and contained this year, and transmission to humans is highly unlikely, according to Living Environments Supervisor Cris Matochi and Public Health Nurse Melanie Davis, RN.

There remains, however, a risk to domesticated birds, they explained.

While encouraging measures to protect domesticated birds, Public Health is focused primarily on human contact and potential infection, according to Matochi.

Prevention is the key to minimizing the impact of the bird flu, he and Davis said.

Davis encourages people to get a flu shot each year. Seasonal flu vaccination will not prevent infection with bird flu, but can reduce the risk of getting sick with human and bird flu viruses at the same time.

Bird flu viruses may be transmitted from infected birds to other animals, and potentially to humans, in two main ways, according to the CDC. They are:

- Directly from infected birds or from bird influenza A virus-contaminated environments through an intermediate host, such as another animal.
- Direct infection can occur from exposure to saliva, mucous, or feces from infected birds. Bird flu infections among people are rare; however, human infections can happen when enough virus gets into a person's eyes, nose, or mouth, or is inhaled. People with close or prolonged unprotected

contact (not wearing respiratory and eye protection) with infected birds or places that sick birds or their mucous, saliva, or feces have contaminated, might be at greater risk of bird flu virus infection.

Wildlife agencies regularly investigate sick or dead bird events if large numbers are impacted. This type of reporting could help with the early detection of illnesses like West Nile virus or bird flu. If local authorities tell you to throw away the bird's carcass (body), don't touch it with your bare hands. Use gloves or a plastic bag turned inside out to place the body in a garbage bag, which can then be thrown away in your regular trash.

To report unusual signs in birds you have seen in the wild, call the Washington State Department of Health Helpline at 1-800-525-0127.

Itle says bird owners should expect the need to continue taking extra biosecurity measures through the fall.

"There is clear evidence that the virus did not re-assort to a less pathogenic form. That's what we were hoping for, but it didn't happen," Itle said. "So far this month there have been new detections along the northern border in our country, indicating that migrating waterfowl will continue to spread the virus through the fall."

"Once it starts raining and standing water returns and ponds fill back up, the problem will be exasperated when the water attracts wild birds," Itle said.

After a detection, state and federal animal health officials monitor for bird

flu symptoms in flocks within a 10 kilometers surveillance zone around the detection site. Flock owners in a surveillance zone are encouraged to self-report the health of their birds using the [online surveillance self-reporting tool](#).

State veterinarians say the biggest risk factor to date is direct contact with wild waterfowl.

Since May 5, when the state Department of Agriculture announced the first Washington case, all 34 infected flocks have had contact with wild waterfowl.

Veterinarians also continue to recommend avoiding bringing birds to fairs, exhibitions, poultry auctions, and on-farm sales.

State Agriculture resources for domestic flock owners to learn about bird flu and protect their flocks include a [bird flu webpage](#), an [interactive map](#), frequently asked questions, a [Facebook group](#), and biosecurity precautions when resuming exhibitions.

If your domestic flock experiences sudden death or illness of multiple birds, use the new [online reporting tool](#) or call WSDA's Sick Bird Hotline at 1-800-606-3056.

Birds that have already died should be double-bagged and kept in a cooler on ice until WSDA veterinarians can arrange for sampling.

Sick or dead wild birds should not be touched or moved and can be reported using the [Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's online reporting tool](#).

Human infection extremely rare, but can occur

If you've had direct contact with infected birds and become sick, the Centers for Disease Control has [information available](#) for different groups of people who may become infected with bird flu and become sick.

Transmission of H5N1, the bird flu virus, to humans is rare, and only [one human case](#) has been confirmed nationally according to the CDC.

People who become sick within 10 days of their exposure to infected birds should isolate at home away from their household members and should not go to

work or school until they are proven not to have bird flu virus infection and have recovered from their illness.

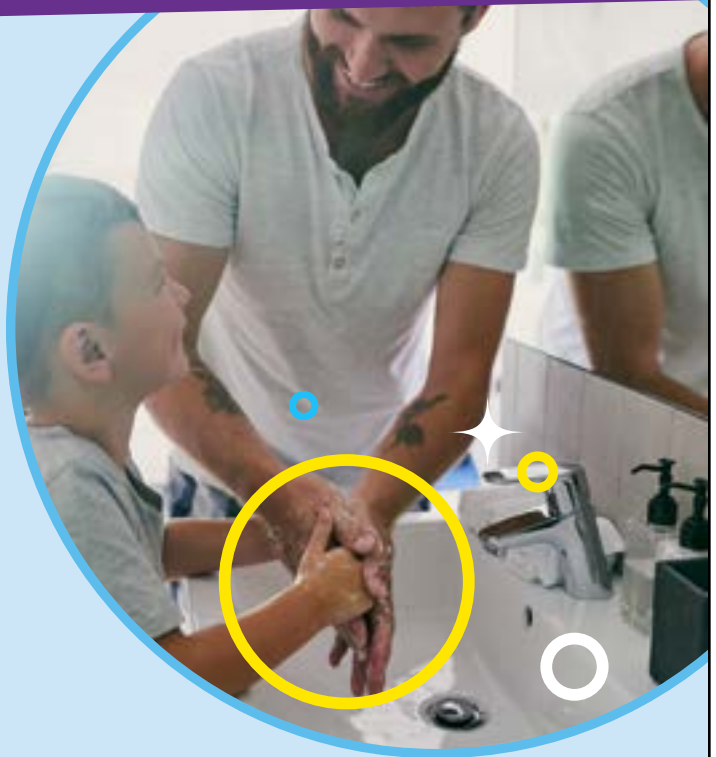
The local or state public health department can assist in monitoring and advising when isolation is no longer required.

Close contacts – family members, etc. – specifically people who have been exposed to bird flu viruses, should monitor their health and report to their health care provider any new symptoms, especially respiratory symptoms, within 10 days of the exposure.

Stop Germs! Wash Your Hands.

When?

- After using the bathroom
- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage



How?



Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.



Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.



Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.



Rinse hands well under clean, running water.



Dry hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Keeping hands clean is one of the most important things we can do to stop the spread of germs and stay healthy.

LIFE IS BETTER WITH

CLEAN HANDS



www.cdc.gov/handwashing

This material was developed by CDC. The Life is Better with Clean Hands Campaign is made possible by a partnership between the CDC Foundation, GOJO, and Staples. HHS/CDC does not endorse commercial products, services, or companies.



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Bivalent for kids nears approval in state

With approval of the updated COVID-19 booster for children ages 5-11 by the CDC and Western States Scientific Safety Review Workgroup, there remains one step before being cleared for use in Washington state.

Before going into the arms of 5 to 11 year olds, standing orders must be issued by the state Department of Health. Once issued, the vaccine may be available as soon as next week at local pharmacies and through medical providers.

CDC Director Rochelle P. Walen-

sky, M.D., M.P.H., signed a decision memo expanding the use of updated (bivalent) COVID-19 vaccines to children ages 5-11. CDC approval followed the Food and Drug Administration's authorization of updated COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer-BioNTech for children ages 5-11 and from Moderna for children and adolescents ages 6-17.

Updated COVID-19 vaccines add omicron BA.4 and BA.5 spike protein components to the current vaccine composition, helping to

restore protection that has waned since previous vaccination and targeting recent omicron variants that are more transmissible and immune-evading.

FDA's authorization of updated (bivalent) COVID-19 vaccines for this younger age group, and CDC's recommendation for use, are critical next steps forward in our country's vaccination program — a program that has helped provide increased protection against severe COVID-19 disease and death.

Updated COVID-19 Vaccine Now available

The Pfizer and Moderna bivalent COVID boosters target the original virus strain as well as the omicron variant.

Contact your medical provider or a pharmacy near you to ask if booster appointments are available.





OMICRON BA.5

Protect yourself. Protect others.

You're doing great! Don't let down your guard.
Stay safe by continuing to:

- Take a rapid home test before gathering or traveling
- Keep COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters up to date
- Gather safely, preferably outdoors
- Mask up in crowded spaces
- Wash your hands with soap and water
- If you're sick, STAY HOME!

Get free at-home test kits online at

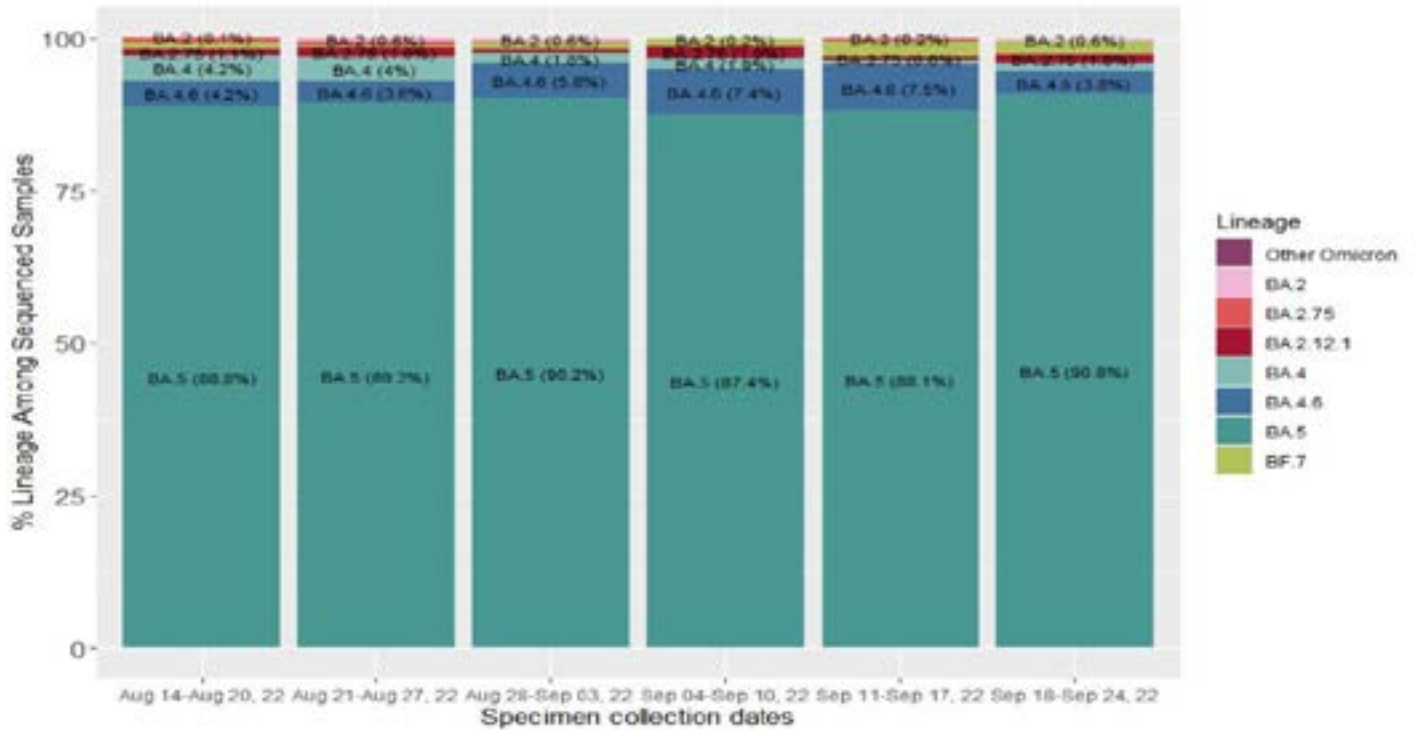
www.sayyescovidhometest.org



Contact Island County COVID Response if you are symptomatic and want to be tested, are planning a large event and need home-test kits, or to get more information about protecting yourself against COVID-19.

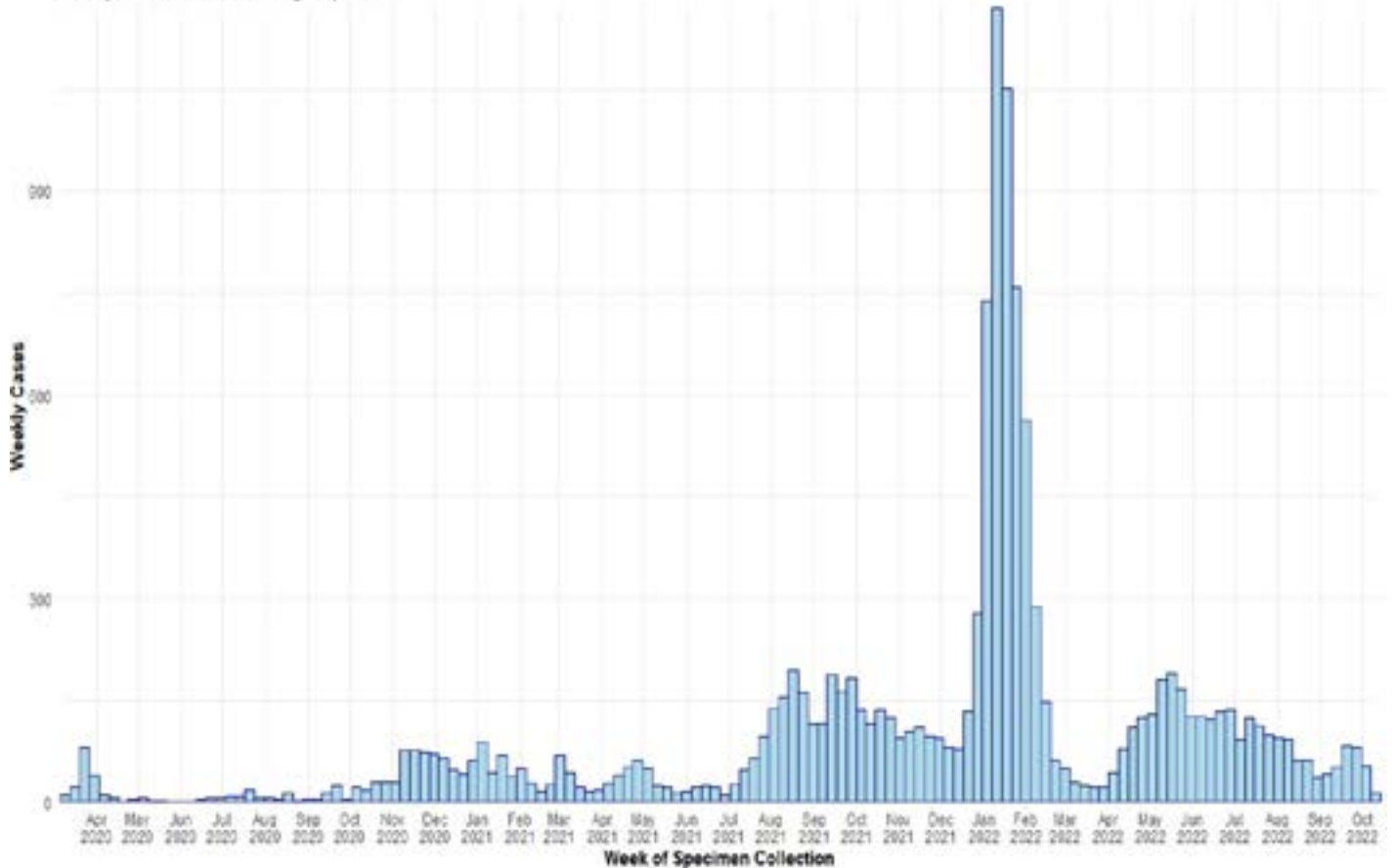
Call 360-678-2301. Hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday

SARS-CoV-2 lineages circulating in Washington state



Island County COVID-19 Cases

Weekly incidence of cases during the pandemic



COVID-19 DATA

WADOH Transmission Level	CDC Community Impact Level		
SUBSTANTIAL	LOW		
7-day Case Rate – 52.11	7-day Case Rate	7-day COVID-19 Hospitalization Rate	COVID-19 Occupancy 7-day Average
50-99.99	<200	<10.0	<10%

Case and hospitalization rates are evaluated in different time frames by different organizations. As a result estimates may differ and be more or less current and complete depending on that evaluation frame.

14-Day Case Rate

Date	N	Population	Rate per 100,000
09/03/2022 – 09/16/2022	89	86,350	103.06
09/10/2022 – 09/23/2022	128	86,350	148.23
09/17/2022 – 09/30/2022	155	86,350	179.50
09/24/2022 – 10/07/2022	127	86,350	147.08

Number of COVID-19 cases in Washington state: **1,824,506** *

Number of COVID-19 deaths in Washington state: **14,400** *

Number of COVID-19 deaths in Island County: **100** *

* As of Oct. 11, 2022

Summary Table of Island County Count Positive COVID-19 Cases

Date	Count	Change
09/20/2022	12600	+68
09/27/2022	12681	+81
10/04/2022	12745	+64
10/11/2022	12805	+60

Island County Total Known Positive COVID-19 Cases by Location

Location	Positive Count	Death Count
Camano Island	3022	17
Clinton	625	6
Coupeville	934	15
Freeland	553	7
Greenbank	130	0
Langley	436	2
Oak Harbor	7101	53
Missing Accurate Zip	4	0
Total	12805	100

Vaccinated Island County Residents

Number of Island County residents who have initiated primary series

60,566

Population (6 months+) eligible to be vaccinated

84,974

Data as of 11:59 p.m. October 8, 2022

Source: Washington State Department of Health Data Dashboard

7-Day Hospitalization Rate

Date	N	Population	Rate per 100,000
09/07/2022 – 09/13/2022	3	86,350	3.47
09/14/2022 – 09/20/2022	11	86,350	12.74
09/21/2022 – 09/27/2022	6	86,350	6.95
09/28/2022 – 10/04/2022	5	86,350	5.79

CONCERNED ABOUT COVID OR FLU?

STOP THE SPREAD OF ILLNESS!



WASH YOUR HANDS

WITH SOAP AND WARM WATER FOR 20 SECONDS OR MORE. CAN'T WASH HANDS? USE HAND SANITIZER.



GET VACCINATED

AGAINST COVID AND FLU.



CLEAN AND DISINFECT

FREQUENTLY USED SURFACES LIKE TABLES, COUNTERS, LIGHT SWITCHES, DOOR KNOBS, AND TV REMOTE CONTROLS.



KEEP HANDS AWAY

FROM FACE TO STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS.



IF YOU FEEL SICK, STAY HOME

FROM WORK, SCHOOL, AND OTHER EVENTS OR ACTIVITIES. IF NEEDED, SEEK MEDICAL CARE.




Island County COVID Response

www.islandcountywa.gov



Think of it as

your best defense.

A photograph of a woman with her hair in a ponytail, wearing a purple t-shirt, smiling warmly. A young boy in a dark blue t-shirt is hugging her from behind, resting his head on her shoulder. They are outdoors in front of a white building with windows.

Get a flu vaccine.

[KnockOutFlu.org](https://www.knockoutflu.org)