

Updated April 13, 2020

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN KITSAP COUNTY:

LOCAL HEALTH OFFICER DIRECTIVES FOR EMPLOYERS, EMPLOYEES, AND THE PUBLIC

Dear Friends, Partners, and Residents of Kitsap County:

As we all work together to battle the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, I ask for your cooperation, patience, and understanding as we search for the best combination of “tools” to help keep ourselves, our family, our friends, our neighbors, and our community safe from this awful disease.

Although much remains to be learned about the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, that causes COVID-19, we do know the following:

- COVID-19 may cause [symptoms similar to flu and colds](#)
- Most people may experience no or mild symptoms, but some people may get very ill and can die
- People who are at a higher risk of experiencing severe symptoms and complications are those 60 years and older and people with underlying health conditions
- COVID-19 infections are increasing in our community
- COVID-19 is spread most easily through close contact or direct contact with infected individuals
- Infected individuals may spread the disease without having symptoms, or may spread the disease before any symptoms are evident
- There are no vaccines or antivirals available yet to prevent or cure the disease
- Social distancing “tools” are the best community methods we have currently to slow the spread of COVID-19

Why do we want to slow the spread of COVID-19? We want to slow the spread of COVID-19 so that our healthcare systems are not overwhelmed by too many cases at the same time and have the capacity to care for those who are the most severely ill. We want people who are in the worst shape to get the medical help when they need it so they don't die.

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Governor Inslee has issued many [proclamations](#), or orders, over the past several weeks to slow the spread of COVID-19. Most of the orders require “social distancing” techniques to reduce gatherings of people in close proximity to each other to minimize the spread of disease. We support these orders. We understand that the orders may result in hardships, however, these social distancing tools are the only methods we have right now to slow the spread of COVID-19.

To simplify the intent and implementation of the Governor’s proclamations, **I am giving the following directives to employers, employees, and the public in Kitsap County:**

EMPLOYERS

If you are an employer who is still allowed to conduct business at your workplace under the Governor’s “Stay Home – Stay Healthy Order”, please do the following effective immediately:

1. Screen or ask about the COVID-19 health status of each employee daily. Determine if employees have any symptoms of COVID-19: **fever, cough, or difficulty breathing**. If any employees have COVID-19 symptoms, they should be sent home immediately (or isolated at work until they can go home) and remain at home for at least 7 days from symptom onset, or 72 hours after fever is resolved without the help of any medications and other symptoms are improving, whichever is longer. Develop a sick leave program if possible.
2. If you have an employee with COVID-19 symptoms that [may have had close contact](#) with other employees or clients, notify those employees/clients of potential exposure and ask them to stay home and monitor their symptoms for the next 14 days. (See footnote regarding health care workers, law enforcement, and other personnel in critical infrastructure positions.)
3. Implement strict social distancing requirements in the workplace. Ensure that all employees maintain a separation zone of 6 feet from everyone else. Prohibit meetings or gatherings of employees unless a separation zone of 6 feet can be maintained. Encourage telephone and video conferencing as a replacement for in-person meetings. Prohibit contact between people (no handshakes or hugs).
4. Provide for adequate “hand hygiene.” Ensure that all employees have easy access to soap and water and/or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
5. Follow and use workplace environmental cleaning guidelines. Use Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [environmental cleaning guidelines](#) to frequently clean and disinfect common work areas, bathrooms, kitchens, and other high-touch surfaces (e.g., countertops, light switches, doorknobs, faucet handles, etc.). Provide disinfection wipes so that employees can help disinfect work surfaces throughout the day.
6. Do not require a note from a healthcare provider to “validate” an employee’s reported illness, or to allow employees to access sick leave or return to work when well. Healthcare providers are overloaded with work at this time, and in many instances will not see patients unless they are very ill. Make temporary exceptions to existing workplace rules requiring a doctor’s note to help maintain a healthy workplace.

7. Allow employees who are “close contacts” with people who may have COVID-19 to self-quarantine at home for 14 days. CDC and state [Department of Health guidelines direct close contacts](#) to self-quarantine for 14 days to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to other employees or the public.
8. Refer to “Workplace and Employer Resources and Recommendations” (<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Coronavirus/Workplace>) for more details. Frequently consult and follow official [Kitsap Public Health District](#), [Washington State Department of Health](#), [Washington State Governor’s Office](#), and [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance](#).

EMPLOYEES

If you are an employee of a business that is still conducting business, help your employer maintain a safe and healthy workplace by doing the following:

1. Don’t come to work if you are ill. [If you are ill, especially with COVID-19 symptoms](#) (fever, cough, difficulty breathing), stay home or request to work from home for at least 7 days from symptom onset, or 72 hours after fever is resolved without the help of any medications and other symptoms are improving, whichever is longer.
2. [If you have been a close contact of someone with COVID-19](#), do not go to work, school or other places and stay home for 14 days and monitor your symptoms.
3. Use social distancing to prevent the spread of germs. Keep a space of 6 feet between yourself and others. Do not shake hands, hug, or contact other employees.
4. Use a tissue or your “elbow pit” to catch coughs and sneezes. DO NOT sneeze or cough into your hands or without covering your mouth. Sneezes and coughs contain germs that are easily spread to others. Keep your germs to yourself.
5. Wash your hands...FREQUENTLY. Good hand hygiene is the most important “tool” we have to prevent the spread of disease. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to cleanse your hands after using a tissue, using the restroom, or coming into contact with “high-touch” surfaces or common areas (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, countertops, faucet handles, toilet handles, etc.).
6. Help your employer maintain a healthy workplace. If your employer provides disinfecting wipes or cleaning solutions, periodically wipe down/sanitize workspaces. If your employer does not provide cleaning materials, ask for them. The germs you prevent from spreading may be the germs that could have made you sick.

THE PUBLIC

If you are not at work, please abide by the Governor’s “Stay Home – Stay Healthy Order”:

1. Stay home except for ESSENTIAL activities. All members of the public should stay at home until April 6, 2020, except for the following activities; the following activities should be done by an individual, not a group:

- a. **Obtaining necessary supplies for family members:** groceries, food, household supplies, pet food, etc. Maintain 6 feet of space between others when you are in public and stay away from people who appear to be ill. Wash or sanitize your hands frequently after touching public surfaces.
 - b. **Engaging in health and safety activities:** medical or behavioral health services, emergency services, purchasing medical supplies or medicine.
 - c. **Caring for a family member, or a friend or pet** in another household.
 - d. **Exercising outdoors in individual pursuits** (e.g., walking, hiking, running, biking) when it is possible to maintain 6 feet of space between people, so that there is no contact between people.
2. Do not engage in group activities or multi-person gatherings. Do not visit or hang out in groups with other people outside your immediate family. Maintain 6 feet of space from others and refrain from direct contact with others.
 3. Stay home if you are sick. Ask a friend or family member to help you get supplies if you are ill. Stay away from others while you have symptoms. If you feel you need medical care, call ahead and follow the directions given to you by your provider.
 4. Provide assistance to family, friends, or neighbors who need help. If others you know are ill and are trying to self-isolate to protect others, have compassion and ask if they need help. You can help others without having to come into contact with them or get too close to them.

Thank you for your cooperation, understanding, and help during this difficult time. If we all do our part and accept responsibility for what we can control, we can slow the spread of COVID-19 and ensure the best outcomes for our loved ones and our community.

Yours in Health,



Susan Turner, MD, MPH, MS
Health Officer

FOOTNOTE: *Guidance for health care workers is covered in this document: [Interim U.S. Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure in a Healthcare Setting to Patients with Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\)](#)*

Guidance for personnel in critical infrastructure positions such as corrections and law enforcement is included in these documents: [Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#)