

Talking points in response to common questions

June 23rd, 2021

- 1. What will change when Washington state “reopens” at the end of June?**
- 2. What is the Delta variant? Do I need to do anything different to protect myself?**
- 3. What can we do to protect people who are not yet vaccinated?**

What will change when Washington state “reopens” at the end of June?

There will be 3 major changes once the state reopens.

- First, there will not be any restrictions on the number of people who can be in businesses and public spaces such as restaurants, grocery stores, shops, theaters, and museums.
 - However, large indoor events with more than 10,000 participants will be restricted to 75% capacity, unless proof of vaccination is required for attendees
- Second, social distancing will no longer be required in place in public spaces such as restaurants, grocery stores, shops, theaters, and museums.
- Third, staying safe and understanding risk is more of a responsibility of individuals and organizations as government restrictions are going away
- The following will remain in place after reopening:
 - Mask wearing guidance will not change and will continue under current guidance described in the [State Health Order on face coverings](#) and from the [Department of Labor and Industries](#).
 - Keep a mask with you, as all businesses and organizations have the right to require everyone to wear a mask upon entry.
 - Everyone who is not fully vaccinated should continue wearing a mask in indoor public spaces.
 - Everyone must continue to wear a mask in hospitals and other health care settings, jails and prisons, homeless shelters, schools and childcare settings, and on public transportation.
 - Travelers should continue to follow [CDC recommendations](#).

What is the Delta variant? Do I need to do anything different to protect myself?

- The Delta variant is one of six coronavirus “[variants of concern](#)” in the United States. It is much more contagious (25-60% more) than the current most common U.S. strain, Alpha.
- The Delta variant will probably become the most common coronavirus strain in the United States. Right now, the variant makes up about 7% of new COVID-19 cases in King County, and 10% of new U.S. cases.
- The Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines are about 88% effective at stopping Delta variant infection **two weeks after the second dose**, according to recent studies. These vaccines are only 33% effective after one dose, though, so it is very important to **get fully vaccinated with both doses**.
- Researchers continue to study the effectiveness of the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine against the Delta variant, and it is expected to also offer significant protection.
- Vaccines help to protect from severe illness and hospitalization for those who do get COVID-19.
- Getting fully vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself and your community from the Delta variant and other strains of the coronavirus, for those who can get a vaccine.
- The biggest danger from coronavirus variants is to people who are not vaccinated. Larger outbreaks of the Delta variant have been seen in communities where vaccination rates are low.
- Those who are not fully vaccinated can help protect themselves and others by continuing to wear a mask in public indoor spaces, physically distancing from others, and [getting tested](#) immediately after any COVID-19 symptoms or exposure to someone who has COVID-19.

What can we do to protect people who are not yet vaccinated?

Many people are still not protected by COVID-19 vaccination

There are still many people in King County who have not been vaccinated for COVID-19, even as more than 70% of people aged 16 and older have completed their vaccinations. People who are not fully protected by COVID vaccination include:

- over 300,000 children in King County under age 12 who aren't yet eligible for vaccination
- people whose immune systems are weakened by diseases such as cancer, medical treatments, or medications
- people who have not yet been able to get vaccinated due to barriers such as a lack of transportation, childcare, or paid time off to get vaccinated or recuperate, and
- people who are understandably unsure or mistrustful of healthcare systems and/or government after experiencing racism or harm.

What unvaccinated people can do to protect themselves:

People who are unvaccinated need to continue protecting themselves and others by following [Washington state guidance](#) including wearing masks when around other people who may be unvaccinated, indoors and at crowded outdoor events.

Unvaccinated people should also take other precautions, including limiting indoor activities with others who are unvaccinated, making sure there's good indoor air ventilation, washing hands, and physical distancing.

How we can protect everyone in the community:

- **Get vaccinated if you are eligible and encourage others.** When more people are vaccinated, each community is better protected. Vaccination is free and available at many locations: kingcounty.gov/vaccine
- **Even vaccinated people may choose to continue wearing masks in public places.** Some may choose to continue wearing a mask if they are at increased risk for severe infection, have an underlying health condition, or are in close contact with someone at increased risk. Others may choose to continue to wear a mask to show support for mask-wearing by unvaccinated people or because they feel more comfortable doing so. Some people also wear masks to protect themselves from other respiratory illnesses or allergens.
- **Businesses have the option of requiring customers to wear face masks.**
- **Masks will continue to be required, regardless of vaccination status, in higher risk congregant settings** like healthcare facilities, long-term care facilities, adult family homes, and shelters, and places where many people are not yet able to be vaccinated, like childcare and schools.
- **Spend time outside** with people who are unvaccinated. The risk of spreading COVID-19 is much lower outside than inside.
- **Improve indoor air ventilation and filtration.** The virus easily spreads indoors, especially in crowded spaces. Businesses and all organizations with indoor facilities should ensure good air ventilation and filtration. More information available at [Improving Indoor Air](#).
- **Get tested if you have symptoms or an exposure.** COVID-19 is still spreading, and the new variants are even more contagious. Getting tested allows you to take steps to protect family and friends. [Testing is free](#).
- **Support people's decision to protect themselves** if they choose to wear masks, physically distance, and avoid indoor gatherings.