

# **Public Health remains vigilant as state COVID restrictions end**

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As the State of Oregon eases business and social restrictions related to COVID-19, the Clatsop County Public Health Department will continue to work to keep residents healthy and safe.

As of Wednesday, June 30, the statewide Risk Level program that imposed limits on restaurants, gyms, houses of worship and other venues based on counties' COVID-19 infection rates will end. Mask mandates have also been lifted, with the exception of federally mandated guidelines covering air travel, public transit and healthcare settings.

The move, announced last week by Gov. Kate Brown, comes as the state approaches a vaccination rate of 70 percent among adult Oregonians and infection rates continue to decline.

But Margo Lalich, interim Public Health Director, reminds people that the virus is still present locally – as shown by a recent local spike in cases – and encourages people to continue to practice personal hygiene habits and, if they aren't already, to get one of the three available COVID-19 vaccines.

As of Wednesday, Clatsop County has recorded a total of 1,069 cases since the beginning of the pandemic. Nine COVID-related deaths have also been recorded.

While Lalich said another surge in cases is possible with the arrival of fall, she hopes that Public Health will soon be able to handle COVID-19 the same way as any other infectious illness that falls under the department's purview as the local public health authority – monitoring for and investigating new cases to identify sources of outbreaks and limit their spread.

Lalich noted that many of the preventative steps promoted to help control the pandemic – hand-washing, staying home when sick – have long been part of Public Health's messaging to fight other illness like the flu.

On Thursday the Vaccine Task Force, a collaboration of Clatsop County, Columbia Memorial Hospital and Providence Seaside Hospital, will hold its final regular vaccine clinic at the county fairgrounds. The task force, though, will remain in place to assist continued vaccination outreach efforts. Public Health is hosting "pop-up" outreach clinics throughout the county, with special focus on workplaces. Business owners or managers interested in hosting an on-site

vaccination event for their employees are invited to call the department at (503) 325-8500.

The large majority of new COVID-19 cases nationwide are occurring among non-vaccinated individuals.

Beginning July 12 the Public Health Department will offer both COVID-19 vaccines and testing Monday through Thursday at its office at 820 Exchange St. in Astoria. As a healthcare setting, masks will still be required for individuals visiting the department. Drive-through testing at the Household Hazardous Waste site in Astoria will continue on Fridays in July.

Vaccines are also available at local hospitals, clinics and pharmacies. Visit our [Vaccine FAQs](#) for more information.

The county's Public Information Call Center will remain available to answer questions Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5 p.m. The number is (503) 325-8500.

Lalich offered thanks to the hundreds of local volunteers who have provided invaluable help to the county's COVID response and vaccination effort, and to the community at large for practicing measures to control the virus.