

Letter to the Community: July 23, 2021

Hello Thurston County! I hope you all are enjoying the sunny weather! I want to answer some of the questions I have received recently. These include questions about being fully vaccinated and exposure to COVID-19 and how water quality is monitored for lakes and beaches in Thurston County.

I am fully vaccinated. Do I have to quarantine if I am exposed to someone with COVID-19?

People who are fully vaccinated (two or more weeks past their last dose of a COVID-19 vaccine series) who have no symptoms do not need to quarantine if they are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 (less than 6 feet for a cumulative 15 minutes over a 24 hour period), unless they work in congregate settings, including correctional/detention facilities, shelters, or with individuals at high-risk of severe illness such as in a health care setting.

I am fully vaccinated. Should I get tested if I am exposed to someone with COVID-19 or if I am experiencing COVID-19 symptoms?

Everyone who has new COVID-19 symptoms should get tested for COVID-19 even if they are fully vaccinated. If you are fully vaccinated and exposed to someone with COVID-19 but are not experiencing symptoms, you generally do not need to get tested unless you live or work in a congregate setting or healthcare setting. When the risk of infection is increased, testing may be necessary if advised by public health officials for everyone who may be at risk, including people who are fully vaccinated.

How do we monitor the water quality at lakes and beaches? When do we warn the public about a potential risk?

Thurston County Public Health and Social Services (PHSS) conducts weekly samples and monitors two swimming beaches at Kenedy County Park and Burfoot Park throughout the swim season between Memorial Day and Labor Day. PHSS also monitors through monthly testing at Black Lake, Deep Lake, Hicks Lake, Lake Lawrence, Long Lake, Offut Lake, Pattison Lake, Lake St. Clair Summit Lake, and Ward Lake between May and October. We also investigate algae blooms to make sure there aren't high levels of toxins. Reporting potential algae blooms is a way the public can help us keep our lakes safe. If you see an algae bloom you can call 360-867-2626 or email enhealth@co.thurston.wa.us. You can also sign-up to receive [algae email alerts](#) about the lakes and beaches.

I also want to share some tips to stay safe from water borne illness while enjoying the amazing lakes and beaches in our county. Take a good look at the water before getting in and avoid water that has algae or a scum on the surface. Try not to drink lake water or get lake water in your mouth. Drying off with a towel as soon as you leave the water and showering or rinsing off as soon as possible after water contact are other ways that you can prevent swimmers itch and reduce your risk of water borne illness. Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer is always a good idea, especially before eating. Keep the water safe for others by not entering the water if you have had diarrhea in the past 48 hours. You can also visit the swimming in Thurston County web site at: <https://www.thurstoncountywa.gov/phss/Pages/algae-swimming.aspx> to find out about swimming advisories in Thurston County. I hope you all stay safe and get a chance to spend time in our beautiful outdoors!

Wishing you the best of health,

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Health Officer, Thurston County