

KPTZ Update on COVID-19 and Jefferson County ~ 3/5/20

The KPTZ Virus Watch Team is establishing direct communications with Jefferson County Public Health Department (JCPH) to get and publish clear answers to the most common questions people are asking about the local situation. With the number of deaths in the Seattle area having reached 10, as of March 4, among the 40 confirmed cases, it is probable that when testing becomes more widespread the number of confirmed cases will begin to expand rapidly.

On March 3, JCPH issued an update on COVID-19. The article can be found at <https://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=438>. A summary of the article follows:

Because of our somewhat remote location, there has been a hope that the spread of the disease could be stopped outside of Jefferson County. The update is not encouraging, stating that the disease is more contagious than the flu and there is a tendency for infected people to have mild symptoms or be asymptomatic.

These two factors make complete containment of the virus virtually impossible. Gradual spread will occur throughout Washington State, including Jefferson County. It is important that we slow this spread and limit the total number of people who are exposed with the highest priority given to protecting those most likely to experience serious complications and the health care workers who care for them. Slowing the spread of COVID-19 allows us to preserve the limited capacity of our health care system to see community members in need of medical care.

The March 3 update makes the following statement on test kit availability:

Testing is now available at the Washington State Public Health Lab and is still very limited (30-40 tests per day). It will be expanded significantly in the days and weeks ahead. The University of Washington and other labs will have testing capacity in the very near future as well. Currently, testing is limited to people who are ill and have been exposed to a known case of COVID-19 or have travelled to countries where widespread community transmission is occurring (China, South Korea, Japan, Iran, and Italy) and are ill enough to require hospitalization. Hospitalized patients with severe respiratory disease of unknown cause are also being tested.

Jefferson County Public Health (JCPH) and Jefferson Health Care (JHC) updates make these recommendations for our community:

1. Do not go to the hospital or to other medical facilities if you suspect that you might have the virus. Instead, call the Jefferson Healthcare (JHC) local consulting nurse line at 360-344-3094 or if you have symptoms, call the WA Department of Health state call center at 1-800-525-0127 and press #. They will tell you what to do and where to go for testing, should it be necessary.
2. Stay home if you are sick. Don't go to school or work.
3. Practice personal hygiene so you don't spread the virus.
4. Protect yourself from contact with sick people, especially if you are not young and healthy.
5. Stay informed. Look for updates on this website, on Jefferson Public Health (Jeffersoncountypublichealth.org), Washington State Department of Health (doh.wa.gov), and Public Health-Seattle King County (kingcounty.gov/COVID).