



MEDIA RELEASE

San Juan County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 7th, 2021

REMINDER TO ALL ISLANDERS ABOUT COVID PRECAUTIONS

A recent surge of cases has focused attention on San Juan Island. Nine new cases so far this week and ten last week is a significant spike.

Some of these new cases have clear connections to off-island travel, some are tied to previous cases, and others have no clear transmission source. The majority of the cases are part of two distinct clusters. The investigation is ongoing, but indications are that spread has occurred via prolonged close unmasked contact, either indoors or a vehicle.

While it is not known if any of these cases are caused by a variant (WA DOH is only sequencing a small number of cases at the moment), it is certainly possible, and maybe even likely the variant strain(s) are present in our community. It is also likely that there is some degree of community spread on San Juan Island.

Yet, as we have seen consistently through the pandemic, COVID is not likely to spread via passing contact in a store, a sidewalk, or even a classroom that is following standard safety protocols. Disease spread most frequently happens via shared living space, indoor socializing or working, or public/shared transportation.

The rise of new variants may increase the risk exposure through casual contact, but prolonged close contact will always be the most likely means of spread.

The good news in this is that there are simple things we can do to help protect ourselves and those around us, and minimize disease spread. Some things to keep in mind:

-Just because you're not on San Juan Island doesn't mean your island is not at risk. While it is certainly possible that cases could spread from San Juan, the far more realistic scenario is that a resident from any island travels to the mainland and brings a case home. A spike in cases can happen anywhere, at any time.

-We all know what it takes to keep safe. Masking up. Minimizing close contact with those outside of our household. Making thoughtful decisions and helping our families do the same. Avoiding travel, and if you are going to travel, [be smart about it](#).

-As we headed into spring, we all relaxed to a degree. Many of us needed a well-deserved break to preserve our sanity. That said, every expert made it clear that a final wave of cases was coming. Now that the wave is here, break time is over.

-Vaccinations are effective and increasing. We're at mile 24 of the marathon. Let's dial it back, mask up, socialize outdoors, avoid bringing COVID back to the islands, remain cautious for another month or two, and get vaccinated as soon as you have the opportunity to do so.