



# MEDIA RELEASE

## San Juan County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 20, 2021

### **BREAKTHROUGH CASES, VARIANTS AND THE CONTINUED NEED FOR VACCINATIONS**

After more than a month of no new cases locally, San Juan County has three new cases of COVID-19. There is one case on each of the following islands: Lopez, Orcas and San Juan. All three cases are breakthrough cases. This means that each person is fully vaccinated and it has been more than two weeks since the vaccine series was completed. All exposures came from outside the community and none of the recent exposures are related to another.

Health Officer, Dr. Frank James, stated, “While it will be three to five weeks before genetic tests can show whether the current cases are the [Delta variant strain, the fact that all three are breakthrough cases in fully vaccinated people, as well as the severity of the symptoms, is consistent in what we would expect to see with the Delta variant.](#)” He also reminded the community that, “The vaccines for COVID-19 are incredibly effective. However, no vaccine is 100% effective at preventing illness in vaccinated people. This is true of *all* vaccines for *all* diseases. There will be a small percentage of fully vaccinated people who will get sick, be hospitalized, or even die from COVID-19.” Asymptomatic infections among vaccinated people will also occur. [Studies are still ongoing](#) to understand the full scope of these possibilities.

The emergence of immunity-resistant variants of COVID-19, the relaxing of social distancing and masking and increased travel are all contributing to the national resurgence of the disease. In the last two weeks nationally cases have increased 126%, hospitalizations have increased 30%, and deaths have increased 23%. Unvaccinated individuals in the US are the primary driver for ongoing spread. Dr. James noted, “Vaccines remain the best way to protect against COVID, and even with breakthrough cases, vaccines reduce the severity of symptoms and hospitalizations. It is more important than ever for those who are not fully vaccinated to become so as soon as possible.”

Vaccines are still being administered in the county. [Please click this link to see the providers on Lopez, Orcas, and San Juan that are currently administering vaccines.](#)

We know that this is not the good news that we have begun to grow accustomed to, but not unexpected. We anticipate ongoing sporadic cases will continue as islanders increase their activities. Therefore, even if you are fully vaccinated there are some precautions that we all can take to further protect yourself from infection:

- **Limit travel.** As we have seen with the recent cases, these exposures came from outside of the community. If you travel off island or host people from outside the community, understand that you are taking a risk.
- **Limit socializing.** The more people you are around the higher your exposure risk is. Although the masking ordinance has been lifted, if you are going to be around large groups of people consider masking up for your own safety and the safety of those around you.
- **Do not expose yourself to those who are confirmed positive cases.** If you know someone has been exposed to the virus or is a confirmed positive case, do not expose yourself until they are no longer infected.

We will reinstate weekly case updates until case trends change for the better. Be safe out there, islanders!