



# MEDIA RELEASE

## San Juan County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 25, 2022

### Weekly Case Update

Since the [last update](#) on Friday February 18th, there have been 27 new confirmed or probable cases in San Juan County. Current case count is now 1202. This is a significant drop from last week's case count (67), and hopefully the first clear sign of the long-anticipated reduction in cases county-wide.

LOPEZ ISLAND: There are 5 new cases on Lopez Island since the last update.

ORCAS ISLAND: There are 4 new cases on Orcas Island since the last update.

SAN JUAN ISLAND: There are 18 new cases on San Juan Island since the last update.

Of these 27 new cases, 17 were identified via one of the free test kits handed out by the County, State or Federal governments, 4 were identified by school district testing, 3 were identified by local medical providers, and the remaining 3 were via other at home or mail-in testing providers.

### What the Future May Hold:

With luck this week's steep drop in case numbers will hold. Schools are currently on mid-winter break, and hopefully students returning to schools next week will not lead to any spike in cases. Islanders are asked to remain thoughtful and cautious over the next couple weeks.

Assuming cases continue to decline, here are some quick thoughts on what the future will bring:

-The Governor will lift his mask mandate on March 21<sup>st</sup>, including for school students. San Juan County Health Department staff will monitor the situation, but currently feel more than comfortable with the timing of this decision.

-Islanders will need to display their usual patience and empathy through the transition. Some will feel most comfortable continuing to wear masks- and that's a perfectly reasonable decision. Some will be eager to go mask free, and if current trends hold, that will be fine too. Recognizing that nearly everyone's nerves are frazzled and meeting that anxiousness with relaxed and patient kindness and basic human decency will go a long way towards healing the collective mental health of our community.

-This all said, COVID will still be out there, is still a serious illness for many, and certainly something to be wary of. There will continue to be hospitalizations and fatalities. With that in mind, it's important that anyone who is feeling sick stay home, and if you need to go out in public while symptomatic, for goodness' sake, wear a mask. Get tested if you think you might have COVID and make decisions based on common sense and respect for your community.

-There is good news: anyone who is fully vaccinated and boosted is quite well protected. Clearly those who are older or immunocompromised are still at higher risk, but so long as they are fully vaccinated and boosted, the risks they face and the precautions they need to take should be similar to what they faced prior to COVID (masking up, avoiding high risk locations, their friends and family being extra careful, etc.).

-While their overall risk is quite low, children under the age of 5 are not yet approved for a vaccine, and as such are at higher risk. A bit of extra caution would be prudent.

-Individuals who are able to be vaccinated but choose not to will continue to represent the majority of hospitalizations and fatalities. As always, the County Health Team will be offering periodic vaccination opportunities (<https://www.sanjuanco.com/1737/COVID-Vaccine-Info>) or contact your local provider or pharmacy.

-More good news is that there are now a number of treatments available that drastically minimize the likelihood of severe illness from COVID. Anyone who is at high-risk of serious illness should have a plan in place to test rapidly should they become symptomatic, and if positive, should contact their medical provider quickly to discuss their options, as rapid treatment is essential.

-As always during these years of disruption and sacrifice, staying flexible and even-tempered is key. Hopefully the pandemic is finally coming to an end, but even if there are more surprises to come, islanders will continue to respond with our humanity and compassion intact and will continue to take care of each other above all else.