

February 2022 COVID-19 Update

At Home COVID-19 Testing Kits Available

There are several ways to locate free COVID-19 testing kits.

- Every home in the U.S. can [sign up](#) to receive 4 tests shipped by the U.S. government. You can also order by phone at 1-800-232-0233 with help in more than 150 languages and for the hearing impaired, a TTY line (1-888-720-7489), from 8 am to midnight ET.
- Washington State Department of Health is offering at-home tests through [Say Yes! COVID Test](#), a partnership with Amazon.
- Health plans are required to [reimburse](#) individuals up to \$12 per test for up to 8 tests per member per month.
- Medicare will [provide](#) up to 8 free at-home tests starting in early spring, call 1-800-Medicare to find a test.

Governor Jay Inslee Responds to Hospitals' Call for Action to Address Health Care Crisis

With COVID-19 cases rising due to the transmissibility of the Omicron variant, hospitals are seeing a dramatic increase in COVID hospitalizations. The health care staffing shortages have led hospitals to be at or over their capacity to treat patients. Washington State Medical Association's recent letter to the Governor and Secretary of Health stated "we are in a state of crisis" and "ceasing or delaying elective services alone is not enough to address this crisis," but called on the state "to help overwhelmed emergency departments and hospitals statewide." Governor Jay Inslee recently [announced](#) several actions in response.

Non-Urgent Care Restriction. The Governor implemented an [emergency order](#) to temporarily restrict non-urgent health care services, procedures and surgeries that are performed in hospitals as part of a package of measures taken to address the current COVID-related state of crisis in hospitals

The Governor's order describes non-urgent health care services, procedures, and surgeries are those that, if delayed, are not anticipated to cause harm to the patient within 90 days. The factors to be considered in making a determination of urgent care include:

- expected advancement of disease process;
- possibility that delay results in more complex future surgery or treatment;
- increased loss of function;
- continuing or worsening of significant or severe pain;
- deterioration of the patient's condition or overall health;
- delay would be expected to result in a less-positive ultimate medical or surgical outcome;

- leaving a condition untreated could render the patient more vulnerable to COVID-19 contraction, or resultant disease morbidity and/or mortality;
- non-surgical alternatives are not available or appropriate per current standards of care; and
- a patient's co-morbidities or risk factors for morbidity or mortality, if inflicted with COVID-19 after the procedure.

The order made clear that diagnostic imaging, diagnostic procedures or testing “should continue in all settings based on clinical judgment that uses the same definition of harm and criteria.”. Family planning services and procedures are to continue without restriction. The emergency order also prohibits all hospitals from utilizing personal protective equipment (PPE) other than according to a conventional capacity strategy. This emergency order became effective January 17th and will remain in effect until February 17th unless rescinded sooner.

National Guard Deployment. The Governor also asked the Washington State National Guard to deploy 100 non-clinical personnel across the state to be deployed to the emergency departments to assist with various non-medical tasks to alleviate the crowded situation currently existing within those emergency departments. The members of the state National Guard will provide COVID testing teams at:

- Providence Regional Medical Center in Everett;
- Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital in Yakima;
- Confluence Health/Central Washington Hospital in Wenatchee; and
- Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center & Children's Hospital in Spokane.
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With the significant demand for testing, the National Guard will be setting up testing sites at:

- Providence St. Peter Hospital in Olympia;
- Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland;
- UW Medicine/Harborview Medical Center in Seattle; and
- MultiCare Tacoma General Hospital in Tacoma.

Additional FEMA testing sites will be set up in King and Snohomish counties.

Transferring Patients to Long-Term Care Facilities. The Governor announced several measures to reduce the number of patients in hospitals by supporting discharges to long-term care facilities by:

- expanding resources at nursing homes to admit patients from the hospital who no longer need hospital care;
- deploying additional staff to work with patients on transition planning, selecting qualified providers, and expediting financial eligibility;
- contracting with Area Agencies on Aging at high-volume hospitals to perform care transitions for individuals not relying on Medicaid;
- providing resources and reducing readmissions to create more capacity for short-term post hospital stays;

- supporting long term facilities with additional staff if needed to accept admissions from acute hospitals; and
- engaging more guardians and expediting guardianship proceedings.

Call for Retired Health Care Workers to Volunteer. The Governor is calling on retired health care workers to return to the workforce temporarily to help with the current crisis staffing and asking them to help with testing, vaccinating or working in hospitals or other locations. Information on volunteering is available at [Washington State Emergency of Volunteers.](#)