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As COVID-cases increase, officials call two-week pause to separate people during infectious period

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Status message

[November 2 - Multnomah County remains in Phase 1 of reopening. We will update with more information as it becomes available.](#)

November 6, 2020

Portland — Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury and Health Officer Dr. Jennifer Vines called for Multnomah County residents to follow Gov. Kate Brown's new recommendations today to address a dramatic

increase in COVID-19 cases. This includes cancelling social activities, shrinking indoor group sizes, and employees teleworking wherever possible for the next two weeks.

Health officials focused on the two-week pause based on the infectiousness period for this particular virus. The goal is to keep people separated until everyone who is infectious right now gets through the infectious phase.

“We need to hit the pause button for two weeks,” said Chair Kafoury. “We must work together to protect our elders, workers in frontline jobs and those with health conditions — especially in Black, Indigenous and other communities of color. This is the best path we can take to keep our hospitals running and get our kids back into in-person school.”

After five straight weeks of rising cases, County officials called upon residents to redouble their precautions to slow the virus before Thanksgiving and the December holidays.

Prior to Oct. 8, there had only been four days since the pandemic began that Multnomah County registered at least 100 cases per day. Since Oct. 8, the County has tallied 13 such days, including four of the last five days, with cases nearing 200 a day.

While increased COVID-19 testing, wildfire evacuations and Labor Day weekend gatherings may have sparked the rise in cases, Public Health officials say that mixing in groups socially and in work-related activities like taking breaks together and carpooling are known to be fueling transmission. Many infections — the so-called “sporadic” cases — cannot be linked to known outbreaks or gatherings.

“Think of this as a 14-day household quarantine before Thanksgiving: one of many things people can do to lower the chances of getting and spreading this virus to their loved ones,” said Dr. Vines.

Gov. Brown’s recommendations, presented at a [press conference](#) on Nov. 6, include:

- A two-week pause on all social activities from Wednesday, Nov. 11, to Wednesday, Nov. 25, in all counties with more than 200 cases per 100,000 over a two-week period, or more than 60 cases in those counties with less than 60,000 people. This includes Multnomah, Marion, Umatilla, Jackson and Malheur counties. Clackamas and Washington counties are on the cusp and the State will update the latest data on Monday, Nov. 9.
- Directing all businesses to have staff work from home to the greatest extent possible.
- Limiting social gatherings to your household, or no more than six people if the gathering includes those from outside your household, reducing the frequency of those social gatherings (significantly in a two-week period), and keeping the same six people in your social gathering circle.
- Halting all indoor visits to long-term care facilities.
- Reducing maximum restaurant capacity to 50 people (including customers and staff) for indoor dining, with a maximum party size of six. Continuing to encourage outdoor dining and take out.
- Reducing the maximum capacity of other indoor activities to 50 people (includes gyms, fitness organizations/studios, bowling alleys, ice rinks, indoor sports, pools and museums).

The new measures do not apply to faith-based gatherings.

The County is meeting with the State to land on new strategies based on lessons learned and to seek support to prioritize local case investigation.

The County has also ramped up testing, focusing on low-barrier sites to support communities within which Public Health sees the most concerning levels of spread by offering [County testing sites](#) outdoors at the East County Health Center, as well as at Latino Network’s Rockwood location and IRCO’s Mid County site.

Officials say these steps should help slow the spread before maxing out hospital capacity and requiring further lockdown.

“We can do this,” Chair Kafoury said. “We can help turn the tide by being even more vigilant about gatherings, social distancing and mask use, especially when we are around people with whom we feel the most comfortable.”

For more on COVID-19, [visit the Multnomah County website](#).

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