



Whatcom County
HEALTH
Department



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 16, 2020

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Whatcom County Health Department and Whatcom Unified Command Launch Mobile Testing Program to Expand Testing Access

BELLINGHAM, WA - Whatcom County Health Department (WCHD) and Whatcom Unified Command (WUC) will open the Bellingham location of their new low-barrier, mobile testing program to the public on Monday, August 17. Located in a Whatcom County-owned parking lot at 211 East Champion Street, the Bellingham site will be open for appointments from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Wednesday, August 17-19 and on Friday and Saturday, August 21 and 22.

"We know that timely testing and results are essential in preventing the spread of COVID-19. We also know there are several barriers to testing, whether it's access to insurance or a primary care provider, reasonable wait times, or distance from home," said Erika Lautenbach, director of the Whatcom County Health Department. "We're providing this additional long-term testing option to address those barriers and augment the testing options already offered by Northwest Laboratory and healthcare providers in our community."

The program will have capacity to serve up to 240 people each day while the trial phase of expanded testing for the public occurs at the Bellingham location next week, during which time staff and volunteers from WCHD and WUC continue to fine tune systems. As additional countywide locations come onboard the program will grow to a capacity of up to 480 tests per day. Operations at the six additional Whatcom County locations - one in each school district - are expected to start as early as August 24.

The mobile testing program will be managed by the WCHD and staffed by licensed medical professionals and trained WUC volunteers. Additional partners include Northwest Laboratory, which will process all specimens collected at the mobile testing sites, and TestDirectly, which provides the online registration and scheduling system.

"This community testing program is an important next step in increasing COVID-19 testing access for all residents and limiting the spread of COVID-19 in Whatcom County," said Scott McCreery, Incident Commander at Whatcom Unified Command. "The program is the result of ongoing efforts between WUC, the WCHD and our community partners to increase Whatcom County's testing capacity community-wide. Lessons learned from the previous testing pilot program helped to inform the process and make it more convenient for those seeking testing. We're excited about the increased testing capacity, ease of use and convenience brought about by our collaboration with Northwest Laboratory and TestDirectly. This is definitely a step change for the community."

Testing is available by appointment only. Appointments are available every three minutes and can be scheduled online at www.TestDirectly.com/whatcom or by calling (360) 778-6075 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. daily. Appointments for the following week will open each Saturday.

Anyone can get tested through the mobile testing program, including individuals without insurance or a physician referral, and there is no cost to be tested. For billing purposes, anyone who has insurance must provide insurance information when scheduling an appointment. People without insurance can also be tested at no cost to them through a [federal program](#) that will reimburse the health department for all costs associated with the test. People who have insurance are not eligible for the federal program and may be held responsible for the cost of a COVID-19 test if they do not provide their health insurance information.

Test results will be reported by phone and, for those who sign up, by email. Individuals who provide an email address when registering online or by phone will receive an email from TestDirectly within 24 hours of being tested with a link to receive their test results. Those who do not provide an email while registering will be notified of their results by phone by WCHD within 72 hours. All individuals with positive test results will receive a call from the WCHD regardless of whether or not they provided an email address.

The expanded testing available through the mobile testing program will improve access for those who have had a difficult time making an appointment with their provider or who need testing on short notice. Those with the ability to get testing from their healthcare providers are encouraged to do so, in order to reserve limited mobile testing resources for those without that option. While this program is designed to be a drive-through testing site, accommodations can be made for anyone without access to a vehicle by calling (360) 778-6075.

For more information on the mobile testing program and testing in Whatcom County visit the [Whatcom County Health Department's testing page](#).

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