



## King County hospitals issue urgent call to action

*King County hospitals issue urgent call to action: 'We Need your Help'*

King County (January 22, 2022)— In the midst of the omicron variant surge, King County hospitals and healthcare partners are issuing an urgent plea to the public to help reduce pressure on hospitals so they can provide essential care for those who need it.

While there are promising signs with cases on the decline the past few days, King County hospitals are still under tremendous strain from increased hospitalizations, staff shortages and difficulty discharging patients who no longer need care. In the previous month, COVID-19 hospitalizations increased over 700 percent from 8 to 70 people hospitalized each day.

"The sheer number of patients means hospital acute care and ICUs across the state are very full. Hospitals are doing everything they can with critical staffing levels to provide care in the most challenging situation we've seen to date," Washington State Hospital Association President & Chief Executive Officer Cassie Sauer said. "The patients most severely impacted by COVID-19 are almost all unvaccinated and unboosted. If you haven't yet, please get vaccinated."

Capacity levels were critical before the current surge with non-COVID care and back-logged surgeries. The surge has exacerbated the situation, making it difficult to provide essential care for non-COVID health concerns.

"We've already had to cancel most surgeries — delaying care that would help someone live a better, healthier life," reads the call-to-action.

**With an appeal to act now, the hospitals and health care partners outlined how King County residents can make a difference:**

**Get vaccinated.** Many COVID-19 patients in our hospitals are unvaccinated or only partially vaccinated. Vaccines work extremely well to reduce serious infections. Data from Public Health – Seattle & King County shows [the risk of hospitalization and death](#) is far greater compared to those who are fully vaccinated. [Vaccines are available at sites](#) throughout King County.

**If you are vaccinated, get a booster.** It's the best protection against needing to be hospitalized from the omicron variant. Everyone ages 12 and older should get a booster dose.

**Upgrade your mask.** If available, use an N95, KN95, KF94 or surgical mask. Wear the most protective mask you can and make sure that it fits well.

**Avoid crowded indoor spaces.** Gatherings will be safer in well-ventilated spaces.

**Save the ER for emergencies.** Do not go to the Emergency Room for treatment of mild illness or for COVID-19 testing.

**Do not delay routine healthcare visits.** Talk to your primary care provider about routine medical care to help avoid needing more advanced medical care in the future.

The call-to-action will be distributed as an ad in the Seattle Times Jan. 23, 2022 Sunday edition. It is signed by MultiCare Health System, Overlake Medical Center & Clinics, the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance, Seattle Children's, Snoqualmie Valley Hospital, Swedish, UW Medicine, Virginia Mason Franciscan Health, Public Health – Seattle & King County, and the Washington State Hospital Association.

For more information on actions to help manage the spread of coronavirus and keep each other safe, access to vaccine, and testing resources, visit [Public Health's COVID resources](#) page.

#### **Quotes from hospitals and healthcare partners:**

##### *Overlake Medical Center & Clinics*

"Like all regional hospitals, Overlake Medical Center and Clinics continues to work diligently to keep our patients, staff, providers and the community healthy. The best way to do this is through the proven prevention measures including masking, social distancing, hand hygiene and being fully vaccinated. Our hospitals are struggling like never before and that can affect everyone in the community as they try to get needed care. Please do your part in not only preserving your own health but also for your loved ones and your community," Overlake Medical Center & Clinics Chief Medical Officer David Knoepfler, MD said.

"Healthcare workers have tirelessly been on the frontlines for two years saving lives and helping our communities as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, we're asking for your help. Getting vaccinated saves lives—by preventing COVID-19 deaths and hospitalizations, but also by freeing up critical resources to support other very ill patients," Overlake Medical Center & Clinics President & CEO J. Michael Marsh said.

##### *Snoqualmie Valley Hospital*

"Our entire staff works hard to support our community. Now we need our community to support us. By helping to reduce the spread of COVID, our community is not only protecting their own families, but they are protecting our healthcare workforce and ensuring we will have enough staff to continue to provide much needed services," Snoqualmie Valley Hospital Chief Executive Officer Renee Jensen said.

##### *Seattle Cancer Care Alliance*

"Protecting the health and safety of our patients and staff is Seattle Cancer Care Alliance's (SCCA) top priority," Seattle Cancer Care Alliance Executive Director & President Nancy Davidson said. "Our cancer patients are not only some of the most vulnerable to infection but also more often require consistent care due to their treatments. And it's because of their needs and those of many other patients that we stand united with the hospital and health systems and public health partners across King County in

calling on the public to help reduce pressure on hospitals, allowing our health care teams to provide essential care for those who need it. And with the public's support in answering our call to help manage the spread of coronavirus - getting vaccinated, boosted if eligible and reducing risk by avoiding gathering in crowded, unventilated indoor spaces - we can ensure that our care locations are as safe as possible for patients."

*UW Medicine*

"The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most serious threats to the health of the public in our lifetime," UW Medicine Chief Executive Officer Dr. Paul Ramsey said. "While our healthcare workers continue to provide life-saving patient care under the most difficult circumstance, our call to action is urgent. We need the support of the entire community to bring the current surge under control and to preserve our capacity to provide every person with advanced medical care when needed in our hospitals."

**About the Washington State Hospital Association**

The Washington State Hospital Association advocates for and provides value to members in achieving their missions and improving the health of their communities. WSHA represents more than 100 hospitals and health systems in the state, including those that are non-profit, investor-owned, and county, state and military hospitals. The Quadruple Aim guides our members and our work as we strive to reduce the cost of health care and improve the patient experience, the clinician experience and the health of our communities. Visit [www.wsha.org](http://www.wsha.org) for more information.

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