Washington State Department of Health

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News Release

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Spanish

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COVID-19 quarantine guidance updated as new strain of coronavirus circulates in some countries

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) is updating quarantine guidance for some travelers and planning to test flight crews arriving from some countries where a new variant of COVID-19 is circulating.

Yesterday, Governor Jay Inslee issued a proclamation requiring all people who travel to Washington state from these countries, which include the United Kingdom and South Africa, to quarantine for 14 days after arriving. The proclamation follows a travel advisory the governor issued last month recommending a 14-day quarantine for all interstate and international travel.

Additionally, people who enter Washington after travel to the U.K. or South Africa should get tested if they develop symptoms. If no symptoms develop, they should get tested five to seven days after leaving the U.K. or South Africa.

Scientists have seen many genetic variations of the virus as it continues to spread throughout the world, but not all changes are significant from a public health perspective. With any new strain, public health officials are looking at whether the strain causes more serious illness or allows the virus to spread more easily. Variations in new strains could also impact the effectiveness of the tests and vaccines currently being used, but to what degree they could be impacted is currently unknown.

U.K. health officials say the new strain may spread more easily, but they are not seeing more serious illness or an impact on vaccine effectiveness at this time.

"This is not the time for panic; it is the time for patience. Our information about this new strain is still limited, and we need to stay the course with our current efforts to control the spread of the virus while we learn more," said Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH, secretary of health at DOH. "We are tracking new developments closely and will continue to adjust our recommendations and response as needed."

Plans for testing flight crews arriving from impacted countries are still in development. DOH will provide more info as it becomes available.

Current quarantine guidance includes these options:

1. Stay in quarantine for 14 days after your last contact. This is the safest option. Monitor your symptoms during this time, and if you have any COVID-19 symptoms during the 14 days, get tested. Certain high-risk settings or groups should use the 14 day quarantine option:

People who have recently been in countries where the new variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, 501Y.V, has been identified .

- People who work or stay in an acute or long-term healthcare setting,
- People who work or stay in a correctional facility,
- People who work or stay in a shelter or transitional housing,
- People who live in communal housing such as dormitories, fraternities or sororities,
- People who work in crowded work situations where physical distancing is impossible due to the nature of the work such as in a warehouse or factory,
- People who work on fishing or seafood processing vessels.

2. If this is not possible, stay in quarantine for 10 days after your last contact, without additional testing. If you have any COVID-19 symptoms during the 10 days, stay in quarantine the full 14 days and get tested. Keep watching for symptoms until day 14.

3. Under special circumstances it may be possible to end quarantine after 7 full days beginning after your last contact and after receiving a negative result from a test (get tested no sooner than 48 hours before ending quarantine.) This will depend on availability of testing resources. Keep watching for symptoms until day 14.

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