

Covid-19 Strategies for Tillamook County: Fighting a pandemic from behind

A presentation from the North Tillamook Public Health Information Group. We are local folks with knowledge and experience in public health. Our mission is to provide information and consultation to North Tillamook County residents, governments, and organizations concerning issues and problems affecting the health and safety of the area's residents and visitors. Email us at citizenhealthandsafety@gmail.com.

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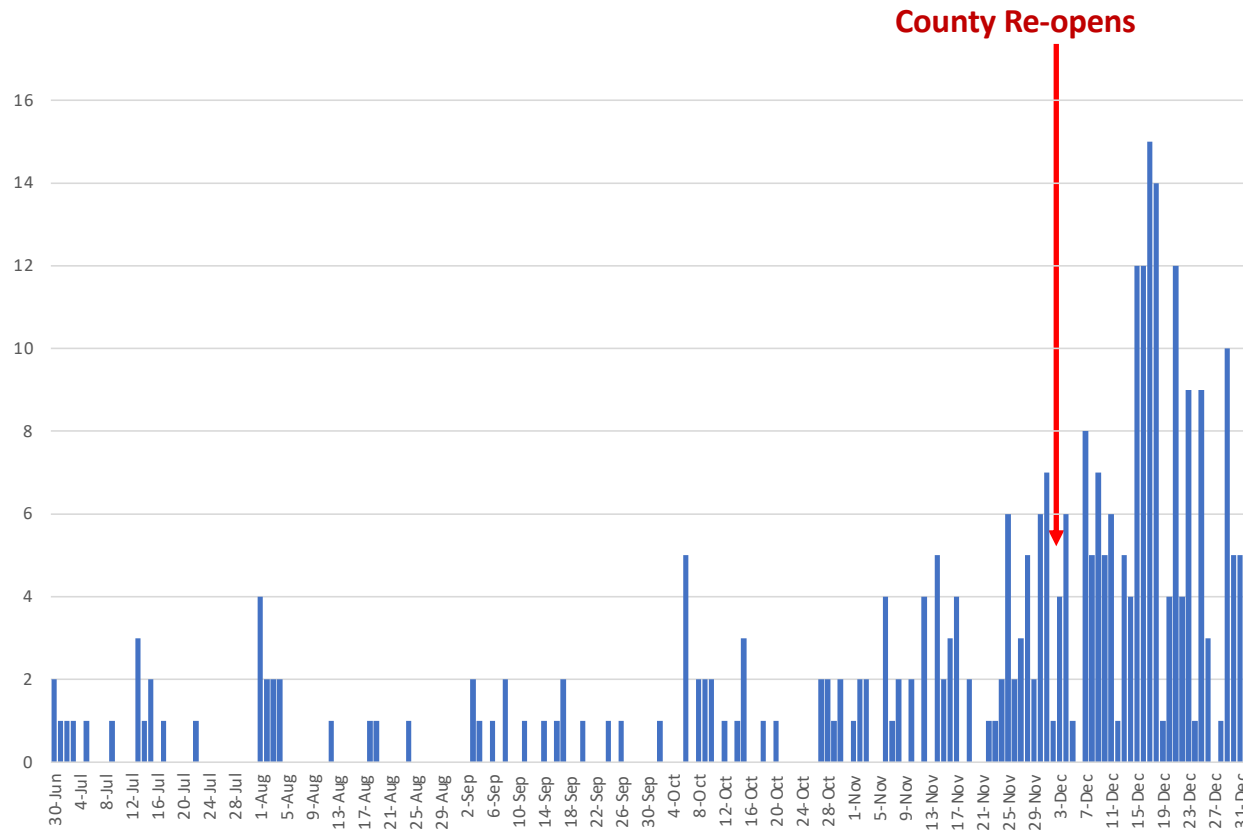
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Where we are now: What the numbers show

1. Number of Covid-19 infections reported
2. Number of virus tests done
3. Percent of tests that are positive

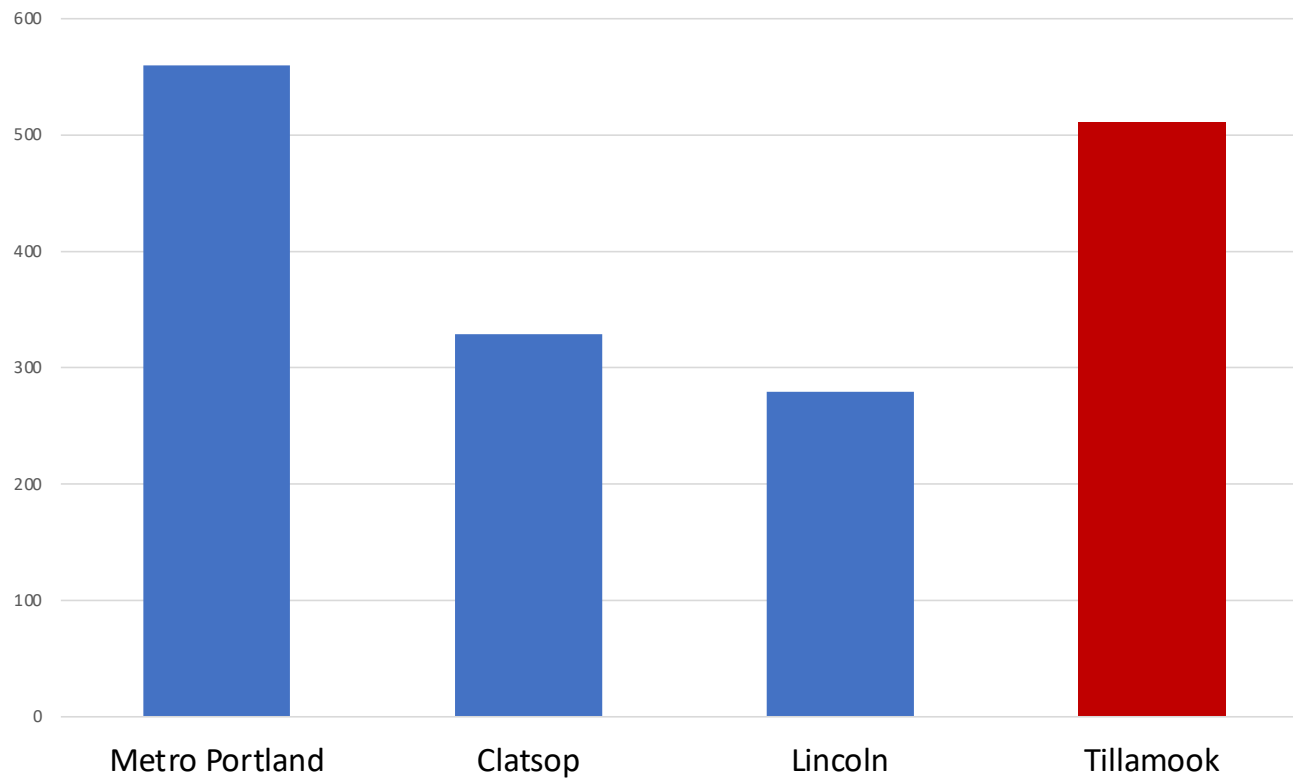
Tillamook Co. Covid-19 cases reported by OHA, by report date



Information source: Oregon Health Authority

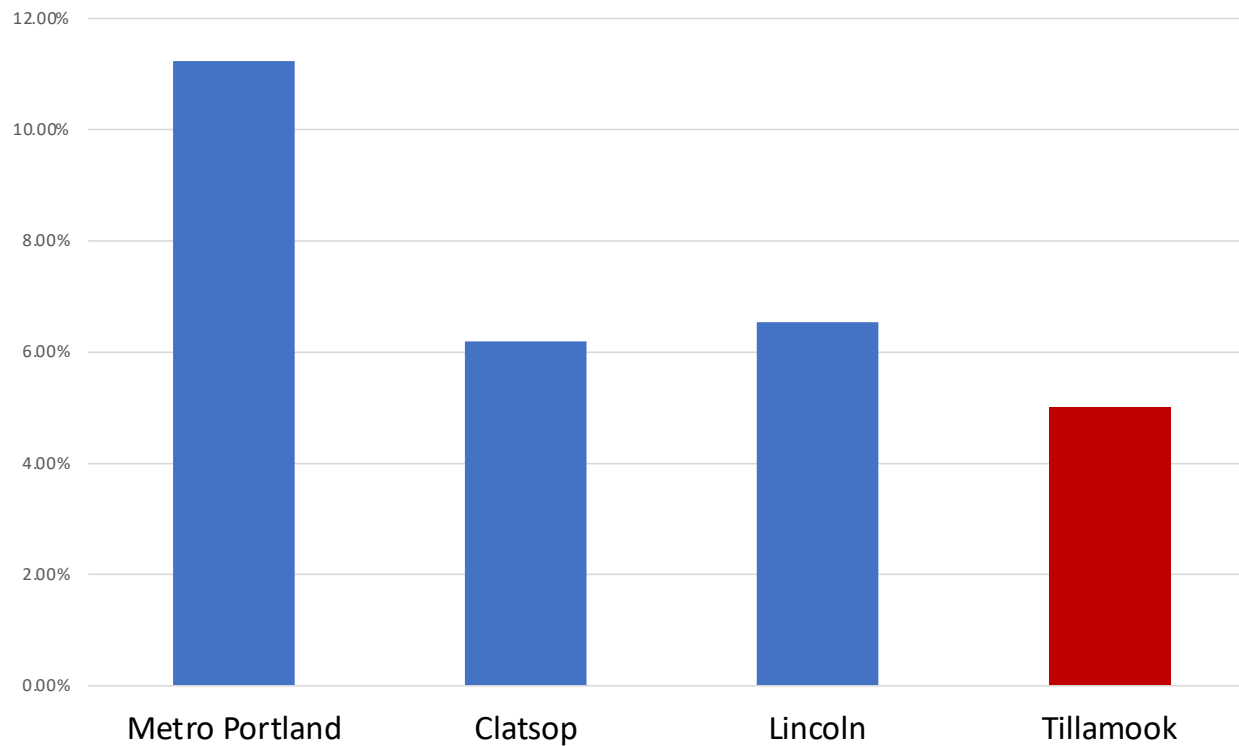
138 cases in the last 3 weeks

Rate of reported Covid-19 cases in last three weeks per 100,000 population, by county



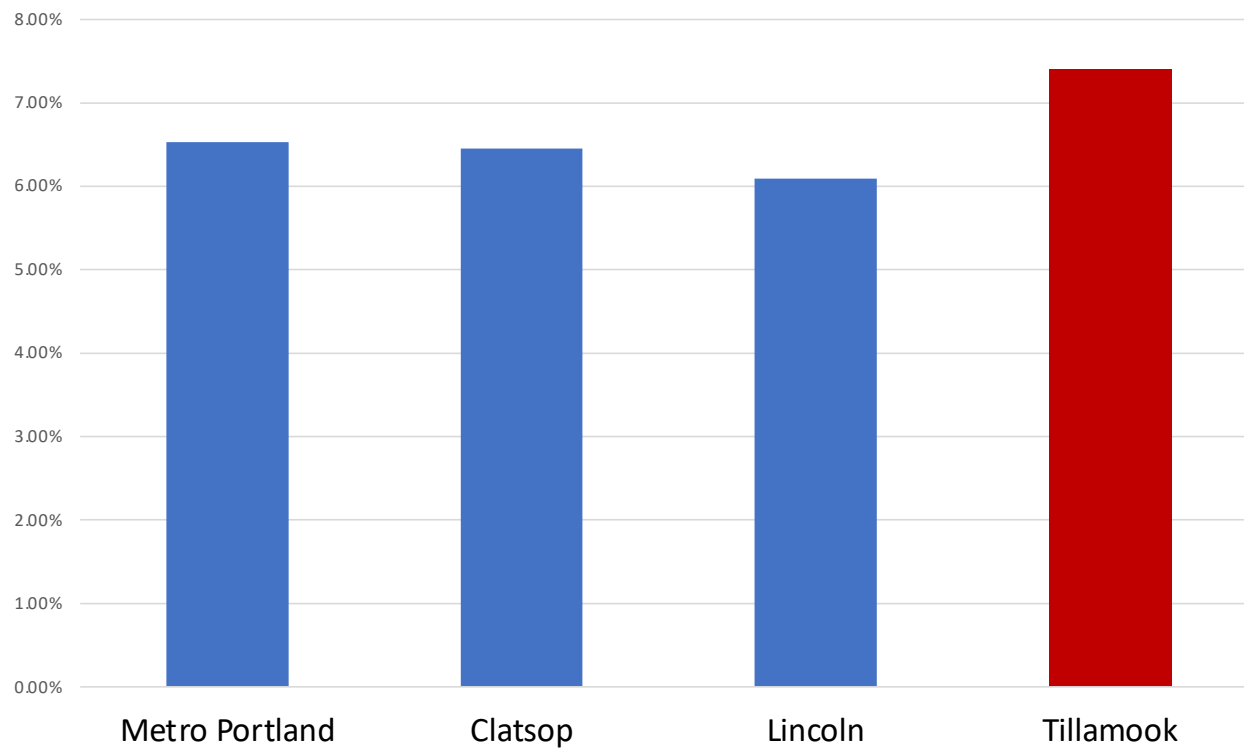
Information source: Oregon Health Authority. Metro Portland=Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington counties.

Number of virus tests done in last three weeks, as a percentage of county's population



Information source: Oregon Health Authority

Percent of virus tests that were positive in the last three weeks, by county



Information source: Oregon Health Authority

Summary of Tillamook County Covid-19 situation: Cases reported

- New case numbers have increased exponentially since November.
- Tillamook County Covid-19 diagnosed case rates are now 70% higher than those of our adjacent coastal counties, and nearly as high as the metropolitan Portland counties.

We have widespread and rapidly increasing disease within Tillamook County to an extent not seen elsewhere on the north coast. Our case counts put us in the “Extreme Risk” level per OHA.

Summary of Tillamook County Covid-19 Situation: Virus testing

- The number of virus tests done each week has been around 300, with an increase to 400 or so weekly tests in December.
- Tillamook County's recent testing is still less than half that of metropolitan Portland counties, and about 20% less than our adjacent coastal counties.

Our low testing rate means we are likely missing some cases.

Undiagnosed cases do not isolate themselves, and so they spread the virus more widely in the community, leading to even higher numbers of infections.

Summary of Tillamook County Covid-19 Situation: Percent of tests that are positive

- Under 3% of virus tests done have been positive until December – when over 7% have been positive (including Dec. 20 week at 9.6% positive).
- Tillamook County test positivity percentage is now higher than that of our adjacent coastal counties and the metropolitan Portland counties.

High test positivity is another indication that there are active undiagnosed cases within the county, and without isolation these cases quickly spread to others. 10% test positivity = “Extreme Risk” level.

A closer look at the Tillamook County case count pattern

July 2020	13 new cases
Aug. 2020	14 new cases
Sept. 2020	14 new cases
Oct. 2020	26 new cases
Nov. 2020	62 new cases
Dec. 2020	<u>177</u> new cases

What can we learn from these numbers about the likely number of Covid-19 cases in the future?

- The number of new cases per month depends on R_0 , the basic reproduction number.
- R_0 is the number of new cases each diagnosed case causes.
- The current R_0 for Oregon is 1.2.

	<u>At $R_0 = 1.2$</u> (current situation)	<u>At $R_0 = 1.8$</u> (new variant)
How many Jan. 2021 cases?	258	653

Principles used in forming recommendations for public health strategy options for Tillamook County

- To reduce illness, disability and death due to Covid-19 infections
- To reduce the possibility of overwhelming the health care system
- To reduce job losses due to the pandemic
- To reduce economic losses in general due to the pandemic

What public health strategies will help us get ahead of the pandemic in this county?

- Universal use of face masks, hand hygiene
- Physical distancing and limiting contacts
 - Limiting gatherings
 - Avoiding travel
 - Avoiding nonessential indoor spaces
 - Avoiding crowded outdoor settings
- Increased testing, diagnosis and isolation, and contact tracing and quarantine

Possible county actions for wearing of masks

- Issue policies or directives mandating use of face masks in indoor (non-household) and outdoor settings
- Provide public information about choosing and wearing masks
- Provide face masks for specific populations (visitors, customers, low-income groups)

Example: City of Manzanita has placed signs mandating mask wearing along main streets and at the places where people leave the beach to enter downtown.

Our group has developed a mask flyer which is now posted on the City, Health District and BBQ websites, and has been translated into Spanish.

Possible county actions for limiting contacts

- Physical barriers and visual reminders in businesses to promote adherence to maintaining physical distance
- Messaging about limiting gatherings per OHA and CDC recommendations
 - Most virus spread now is from small group gatherings
- Continued limits on high-risk indoor spaces

Example: Our group has developed a flyer on gathering safely which is now posted on the City, Health District and BBQ websites, and has been translated into Spanish.

Possible county actions for testing and follow-up

- Ensure the Health Department has adequate resources to provide:
 - Prompt case investigation and contact tracing
 - Timely follow-up and testing of close contacts of cases, to identify asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic contacts soon enough that quarantine will help.
- Encourage and support efforts to assist people who are isolating and quarantining

What about vaccines?

- The State and country will not reach the 85% level of immunity until at least the second half of 2021.
- There is a major risk of public misunderstanding of the need to continue individual, household and community mitigation strategies until herd immunity is reached.
- Messaging here will be key. The County could help by supporting development of locally appropriate messaging, including to at-risk and difficult to reach populations.

How do these recommendations relate to our underlying principles?

- To reduce illness, disability and death due to Covid-19 infections
- To reduce the possibility of overwhelming the health care system
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