



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – August 19, 2021

Contact: Bridget Turrell, Memorial Communications, 509-575-8116

***Yakima Valley Memorial
Implores Community to Follow Governor’s Mask Mandate, Get
Vaccinated as COVID Cases Surge***

YAKIMA — Washington state is breaking new records for hospitalizations. More than 95% of the COVID hospitalizations are among the unvaccinated, according to the state Dept. of Health. Hospitals across the state are straining under this surge, and an unprecedented shortage of healthcare workers.

The Yakima Health District reported 297 new cases of COVID-19 just yesterday. “The positivity rate in Yakima County is now over 30% — the highest rate we have seen during the entire pandemic. This is extremely concerning,” says Dr. Tanny Davenport, Memorial’s Physician Executive for the Medical Group.

Yakima Valley Memorial has seen patient volumes near capacity on some days this past week. We assure you that if you come here, we will see you, but we are extremely busy. COVID patients are being admitted at the highest rate since January. We were treating 39 COVID patients yesterday.

Increasing hospitalizations are one of the reasons Governor Inslee issued a state mask mandate yesterday, and an order requiring all public, private, and charter school employees to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

We support the governor’s proclamation, because masking and vaccination are THE BEST TOOLS we have against the insidious delta variant causing the current COVID surge.

We implore you to follow the new mask mandate. When the first mask mandate went into effect in June of 2020, COVID cases dropped dramatically. There was a direct correlation. While people were wearing masks and social distancing, we essentially ‘skipped’ flu season in 2020/2021, with only a small number of flu cases compared to thousands of such cases in a typical year.

The delta variant is a different animal and a far more frightening opponent than the original virus. It appears to spread even in outside situations with large crowds, like the Watershed Music Festival at the beginning of the month, when more than 25,000 fans packed the Gorge for the three-day country music festival. More than 200 COVID cases in have now been linked to it.

We will hold a news conference today at 2 p.m. on the grassy area to the west of Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital to answer questions on these topics. Map and directions in body of email.

###

About Yakima Valley Memorial

Yakima Valley Memorial is a health care system that includes Yakima's only acute-care center, a 226-bed, nonprofit, community hospital serving Central Washington's Yakima Valley. Yakima Valley Memorial includes primary care practices and specialty care services including high-quality cardiac care; cancer care through North Star Lodge; breast health at `Ohana Mammography Center; acute hospice and respite care at Cottage in the Meadow, winner of the Circle of Life Award from the American Hospital Association for innovative palliative and end-of-life care; pain management at Water's Edge; an advanced NICU unit, the only place in Central Washington that offers specialty care for at-risk infants; advanced services for children with special health care needs at Children's Village; and The Memorial Foundation, a separate 501c(3) organization that raises funds for innovative health care programs in the Yakima Valley (www.memfound.org).

Visit Memorial online at www.yakimamemorial.org or on Facebook (www.facebook.com/yakimavalleyhospital), Twitter (www.twitter.com/Yakima_Memorial) or Pinterest (www.pinterest.com/yvmh).

..