HOW TO GET TO MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS SAFELY

We all know that we’re supposed to stay home, especially if we’re not feeling well. But what about getting to important medical appointments like dialysis? Or visiting your health care provider after calling their office and telling them about your COVID-19-like symptoms?

Sometimes we need to get from our homes to the doctor’s office for non-emergency medical needs. If you or your loved one doesn’t feel well, has pending test results, or tests positive for COVID-19, what are the best ways to get to important medical appointments without exposing yourself or others?

Take a personal vehicle

Wherever possible, use a personal mode of transport to minimize exposure to others. If you do not have your own car, ask a family member, roommate, or friend if you can borrow theirs, or ask them to drive you.

- Ensure everyone in the car wears a mask.
- Limit the number of people in the car to as few as possible.
- Maintain distance between people as much as possible. Ask passengers to sit in the back to create physical distance.
- Keep tissues and hand sanitizer in your car.
- Cough and sneeze into your sleeve.
- Increase airflow by putting the windows down.
- Do not recirculate air.
- Clean and disinfect all surfaces before and after the trip, especially if you borrowed the car or are giving someone a lift. Play close attention to surfaces that are touched often by passengers, such as door handles, arm rests, steering wheels, gear shifters, commonly-used buttons, and seatbelts.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
Make sure the recirculate air button is OFF to reduce potential spread of COVID among passengers.

**Avoid Public transportation, ride-sharing or taxis**

We know that not everyone has access to a personal vehicle, and many rely on public transit. However, if you are symptomatic or confirmed to have COVID, it is important to avoid public vehicles to the extent possible to reduce risk of exposure to others.

Despite reductions to fixed-route services, King County Metro is currently developing supplemental mobility service to help make essential transportation services available.

**COVID-positive individuals**

Public Health is currently working with King County Metro to create a separate service for COVID-positive individuals who need to travel for medical care.

This program will use dedicated Access vehicles, bus bases, and drivers who have volunteered for the assignment. As we learn more, we will share that information widely.

**Individuals with disabilities**

Access is maintaining its traditional service area, hours, and days of service, and may be an option for fixed-route riders with disabilities who are not currently certified for Access service.

Customers with disabilities who are no longer able to reach their essential destinations using fixed-route service can contact the Access Transportation Call Center at 206-205-5000 for assistance with both emergent and ongoing essential transportation needs.

Customers with disabilities who have emergent transportation needs do not need to be currently certified for Access service. Those with an ongoing need for transportation will need to apply for Access service through Metro’s temporarily streamlined eligibility process.

The Access program has taken significant steps to reduce risk from COVID-19 for customers and operators, including:

- Scheduling no more than two passengers on a bus at one time and eliminating fare collection.
• Issuing personal protection equipment to all operators, including gloves and hand sanitizer.
• Installing vehicle disinfecting sites around the county. Staff with personal protective equipment disinfect the buses between trips and operators frequently wash their hands.
• Disinfecting all Access vehicles again at the end of service each night.
• Posting signs at all Access facilities to encourage office staff to stay six feet apart.

As a reminder, it is important to stay home when you are feeling sick as much as possible unless you have to go to an essential medical appointment. If your symptoms worsen and you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19, call 911 immediately and notify the operator that you have or think you may have COVID-19.

Resource:
https://publichealthinsider.com/2020/04/08/how-to-get-to-medical-appointments-safely/