A picture containing food, flower

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**Inslee issues 'stay-at-home' order for Washington state**

Washington officials say residents will need to stay home, unless absolutely necessary. "Essential businesses" may remain open to the public.

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OLYMPIA, Wash. — Washington has joined at least a [dozen other states](https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/what-does-shelter-in-place-mean-these-are-the-states-that-want-citizens-to-stay-home/507-9f19139a-2f1d-4c8b-9343-2c8fd42b2208) in issuing orders for residents to "stay-at-home," in an effort to slow the growing coronavirus outbreak. Only "essential businesses," may remain open to the public.

Gov. Jay Inslee announced the statewide order at Monday at 5:30 p.m. The order takes effect immediately for residents, and in 48 hours for businesses. The order will be in place for two weeks.

Grocery stores, pharmacies, banks, gas stations and restaurants offering take-out are among the essential businesses that will be allowed to remain open. State officials urged residents to not rush these businesses and to not hoard supplies.

The order means:

* Grocery stores, banks, gas stations, pharmacies will be allowed to stay open. Restaurants offering take out will also be allowed to operate.
* Private and public gatherings are barred, including weddings and funerals.
* People will still be allowed to go outside for activities such as walking or exercise, but are reminded to keep at least 6 feet distance from other people.

Several cities, including Edmonds and Everett, have already issued stay-at-home orders.

Health officials say that limiting physical public contact is the best way to avoid spreading the new coronavirus which causes the respiratory illness COVID-19.

Many public places in Washington state have already been severely restricted or closed by state and local officials.

Schools, public events and dine-in restaurants already have been closed or canceled for at least a week. A ban on gatherings larger than 250 drove many churches and other houses of worship to cancel in-person services.

Some cities and King County already have closed ball fields and play structures to discourage public gatherings.

However, despite the closures and warnings over the past couple of weeks, people in Washington have continued to gather in big crowds or travel.