

WashU Med COVID-19 Update

April 2, 2020

Information for School of Medicine faculty, staff and students

Current COVID-19 stats

At BJH, there are currently **33** inpatients who are confirmed positive and **24** admitted patients under investigation (PUIs), which means that results are pending.

Expanded use of personal protective equipment (PPE)

BJC HealthCare and Washington University School of Medicine are moving to a broader masking strategy for employees. This change is in response to the local increase in COVID-19 cases, increasing recognition of the potential risk of transmission with minimal or mild symptoms, and concerns expressed by our employees. This is a challenge being faced across the health-care industry, and many St. Louis systems throughout the region also are moving in this direction.

- The new PPE guidance will recommend that all employees with patient or public interaction wear an isolation mask during their shift.
- Evidence continues to indicate that the majority of COVID-19 transmission occurs from symptomatic patients. However, due to the potential for transmission when patients are not yet showing or recognizing symptoms, masking may help provide protection to employees from pre-symptomatic patients, and to patients from pre-symptomatic employees.

To support this PPE update, a new simplified [one-page infographic](#) has been created. The updated guidelines will be posted on the FPP intranet within the next

24 hours.

Probationary period paused for School of Medicine investigator track faculty

Due to severe disruptions in academic career progress imposed by pandemic conditions, the tenure probationary period will be tolled (paused) for one year for all faculty members currently in their probationary period and for all faculty members who commence their probationary period from this day forward for the next 15 months, through June 30, 2021. Faculty members also may choose not to use the extra time and proceed as expected prior to the pandemic, but please be aware that the end date on all tenure status forms will be automatically moved forward in time by one year.

Updates to ordering COVID tests in Epic

To facilitate optimal test utilization and clinical workflow, there are several changes to the process of ordering COVID-19 RNA testing in Epic. Please [review the updates](#).

Loss of smell and taste can be signs of coronavirus, sometimes the only signs

Jay Piccirillo, professor of otolaryngology, tells FOX2 anchor Mandy Murphey that doctors are reporting [loss of smell and taste in about half of coronavirus cases](#). He also said some people may only have those two symptoms and no fever or body aches.

Can plasma from COVID-19 survivors help others battle the disease?

Associate professor Jeffrey P. Henderson is one of the leaders of a nationwide trial, with colleagues at Johns Hopkins and

Mayo Clinic, exploring [whether antibodies in plasma can be used as treatment](#) in patients with COVID-19. In the latest episode of the School of Medicine podcast Show Me the Science, he discusses the effort to test plasma as a way to treat very ill patients.



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