

## WashU Med COVID-19 Update

May 4, 2020

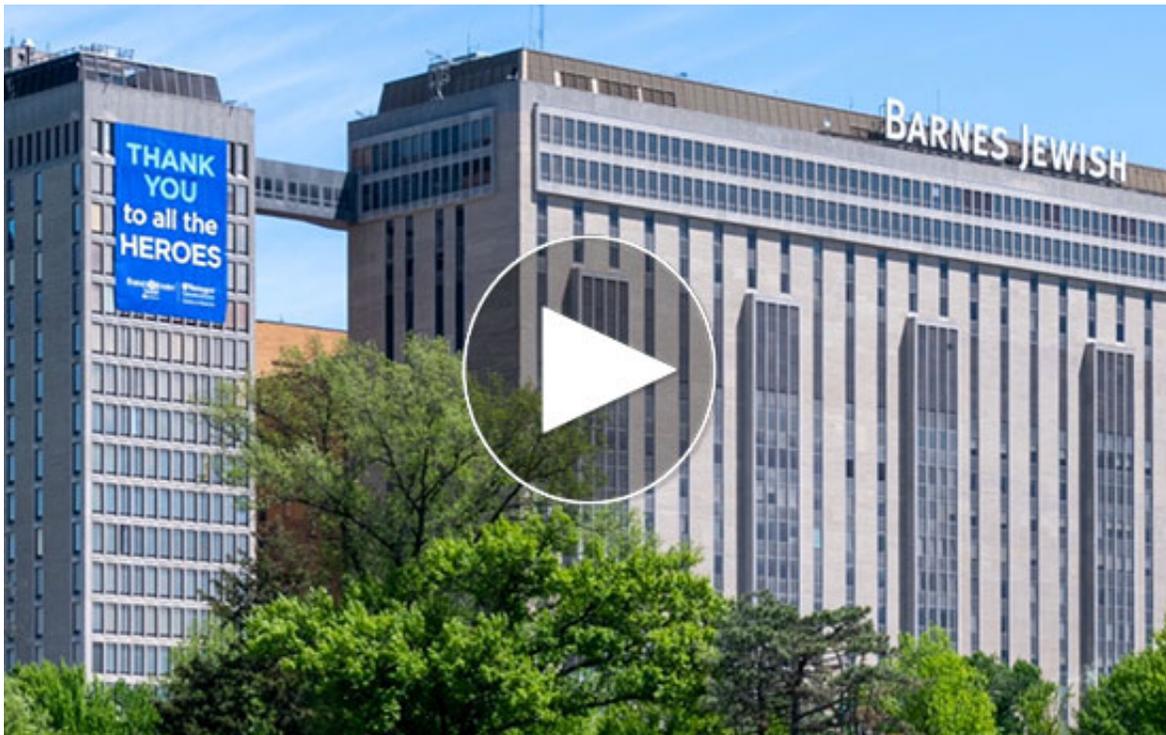
Information for School of Medicine faculty, staff and students

### Today's COVID-19 stats from BJH

**87** inpatients confirmed positive      **35** admitted, awaiting test results

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### A giant 'thank you' to essential workers



Washington University School of Medicine and BJC HealthCare are showing gratitude to our campus heroes — our essential workers — by placing signs all around the medical center, including this one on Queeny Tower.

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## Team develops method to disinfect N95 masks using vaporized hydrogen peroxide



Anticipating a shortage of N95 respirator masks, a team of experts from WUSM, BJH and BJC HealthCare [developed a process to disinfect large numbers of N95 respirators using vaporized hydrogen peroxide](#). The novel method and its effectiveness are reported April 27 in the Journal of the American College of Surgeons. Shaina Eckhouse, MD, an assistant professor of surgery, is the study's senior author.

The group adapted an existing process allowing single-use N95 respirators to be safely reused by the same health-care worker up to 20 cycles. Returning the N95 to the same person also helps ensure the proper fit of the respirator. The group currently is able to disinfect 1,500 N95s per day and is building the capacity to disinfect up to 6,000 N95s per day, according to the researchers, including first author and surgery resident Julie Grossman, MD, and co-author Andrew Pierce, director of supply and perioperative business at Barnes-Jewish Hospital. Each health-care worker places his or her own N95 into a gas-permeable bag and writes his or her department and name on the bag so the respirators can be disinfected and returned.

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**Reminder: universal**

## masking starts Wednesday, May 6

All employees will be required to wear masks while on the Medical Campus starting Wednesday. You can use a homemade mask or pick up one at one of two screening stations.



Here are details and a few important things to remember:

- Please bring your own mask from home if available.
- The School of Medicine will provide cloth masks if needed for those who work outside of clinical areas. If you do not have a mask, staff will distribute a package of four masks for those with a WUSM ID at two screening stations this week:
  - The BJC Institute of Health ground-level entrance
  - The Mid Campus Center first floor lobby
- Wear your mask inside buildings at all times, except in restroom stalls, while eating, if alone in an office or more than six feet from other people, or if the mask needs to be changed because it becomes soiled.
- Wash your hands before putting on the mask and after taking it off.

As we've learned, the virus is often spread before individuals begin experiencing symptoms. The new policy follows guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and is designed to protect against asymptomatic transmission.

The general PPE guidelines for health-care providers will not change. Employees with patient contact or significant public interaction will continue to wear required PPE, as outlined in the guidelines. However, they will need a personal mask upon entry and while moving about the building.

As we begin preparations to reintroduce services following the pandemic's peak, preventive measures including masking and social distancing are as important as ever. From news reports tracking the disease trend, the measures appear to be working. Thank you for your continued vigilance for the safety of our patients and

co-workers.

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## Questions loom about second wave of infections



As communities across the region plan when and how to lift coronavirus lockdowns, health experts are bracing for the likelihood that loosening current restrictions could lead to a second wave of infections. Just because the St. Louis region is at, or even slightly beyond, its initial peak in cases, that does not mean people should act as though danger from the virus has subsided, said Steven Lawrence, MD, MSc, an associate professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases. [To safely open, Lawrence told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, robust capacity for testing and contact tracing must be in place.](#) If those are absent, it could be like loosening controls too soon on a “smoldering fire,” he said. “Past peak in no way means we’re past the threat. There’s still a lot of transmission. If there’s a relaxation ... while you’re still near the peak, the risk is much higher that our efforts will fail.”

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## Myths about a COVID-19 vaccine

As COVID-19 continues to affect daily life across the country, many are eagerly awaiting the development of a

vaccine. Michael S. Kinch, PhD, associate vice chancellor and director of the Center for Research Innovation in Business, wrote a [commentary for the Washington Post highlighting five myths about vaccines](#). Among the myths is that a COVID-19 vaccine will arrive in 12-18 months. “These activities require time, and improved technology does not accelerate them,” Kinch wrote. “Rushing these procedures — and there will certainly be pressure to do so — escalates the risk of an ineffective or dangerous vaccine.”



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## COVID-19 serologic testing began today



The Barnes-Jewish Hospital Core Laboratory now offers serologic testing for COVID-19 using the Abbott SARS-CoV-2 IgG serologic assay. The testing, available to patients at BJH and St. Louis Children’s hospitals, allows for the qualitative detection of SARS-CoV-2 IgG, which has been suggested to play a role in COVID-19 diagnosis, identification of patients with presumptive immunity and identification of convalescent plasma donors. However, serologic testing for these purposes has important limitations, which should be carefully considered.

[Here are frequently asked questions on serology testing.](#)

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## Important numbers and links

- Call the BJC/WUSM employee hotline for COVID-19 exposure or illness:  
314-362-5056
- Use this [online screening tool](#) before reporting to work
- Review [inpatient protocol](#)
- Review [ambulatory protocol](#)
- Call the Coping with COVID hotline for in-the-moment emotional support:  
314-286-1700
- Contact the Employee Assistance Program for 24/7 work-life support: 844-365-4587
- Email inspirational stories to [heroes@wustl.edu](mailto:heroes@wustl.edu)

For Medical Campus updates, visit [coronavirus.med.wustl.edu](https://coronavirus.med.wustl.edu) »

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