WashU Med COVID-19 Update

November 5, 2020

Information for School of Medicine faculty, staff and students

Today's COVID-19 stats from BJH

64 inpatients confirmed positive 16 admitted, awaiting test results

WUSM recruits participants for COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial

The School of Medicine is a testing site for the Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson’s phase 3 clinical research study to evaluate the safety and efficacy of Janssen’s investigational COVID-19 vaccine candidate.
The School of Medicine will enroll up to 500 adults ages 18 and older in the St. Louis region.

“In seeking volunteers, we are hoping to enroll people from diverse communities across the St. Louis region, as well as those who are at high risk of infection due to their age or the nature of their jobs, such as essential workers,” said Rachel Presti, MD, PhD, an associate professor of medicine and medical director of Washington University’s Infectious Diseases Clinical Research Unit, which is leading the trial.

For information about participating in the COVID-19 vaccine trial, email idcru@wustl.edu, call 314-454-0058 or visit the Division of Infectious Diseases clinical trials website.

Learn more in these Fox2now and KSDK news stories.

Preventing COVID-19 among unhoused people

The most recent episode of the “Show Me the Science” podcast focuses on efforts to prevent COVID-19 outbreaks among people who lack adequate housing. Testing, social distancing, wearing masks and regular hand washing are among the tools recommended to limit the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Achieving
such practices can be challenging for people who don’t have homes and often must eat and sleep in places with other people.

Stephen Y. Liang, MD, an associate professor of medicine, and Nathanial S. Nolan, MD, a fellow — both in the Division of Infectious Diseases — discuss what they’ve learned about the risks faced by unhoused people in the St. Louis region. They also discuss recommendations and changes being implemented at regional shelters and meal centers to limit the spread of COVID-19.

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**Health experts offer Thanksgiving advice**

In a recent STAT news article about Thanksgiving gatherings, Anthony Fauci, MD, director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said his own daughters will not be coming home for the holiday. He suggests others give serious consideration to the possibility of exposure before planning get-togethers.

“I think people are going to have to evaluate the level of risk that they want to take, particularly in families in which you have grandpa and grandma and elderly individuals who are going to be vulnerable,” he said.

Although public health experts continue to caution against family gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic, many Americans — weary from restrictions and eager to connect with loved ones — will choose to come together this Thanksgiving.
Multiple experts offered advice for those who do. Gatherings, they say, should be small and made up only of people who take similar precautions to avoid infection, including quarantining and mask-wearing. Risk can be further minimized by driving instead of flying, and limiting the number of people involved. Celebrating with only those in your “COVID bubble” and joining others virtually remains the safest option.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention holiday guidelines also recommend assessing the current COVID-19 levels in your community to determine whether to postpone, cancel or limit the number of attendees at your gathering.

Mental health resources for employees in the midst of the pandemic

“Hey, this is a marathon, not a sprint.”

Jessica Gold, MD, WUDirect psychiatrist and director of wellness engagement and outreach in the Department of Psychiatry, discussed mental health resources for employees at the Virtual Health Happening Fair held Oct. 26–30.

Gold said “it’s important that we check in with ourselves,” as rates of anxiety, depression and substance abuse continue to rise during the pandemic. She emphasized that “there are no typical emotional responses” to the unprecedented circumstances people are experiencing.

Watch the video for more tips, including how to recognize the warning signs that
Washington University employees and their family members (ages 18+) who are enrolled in the university-sponsored health plan (United Healthcare) now have convenient access to WUCare, a new adult primary care medical office located in Suite 5A in the Center for Advanced Medicine. WUCare is exclusively for WashU employees covered by the university health plan. Call 314-747-5900 to schedule an appointment.

For medical concerns that can’t wait, WashU Express Care (by virtual visit) offers same-day care to employees and their families Monday-Friday, 11 a.m.–11 p.m., and Saturday/Sunday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. WashU Express Care is for adult care (age 18+) only. Call 844-747-3500 to schedule your visit. For life-threatening emergencies, call 911 or go to the closest emergency room.

The WashU Express Care co-pay is $25 under the university-sponsored health plan (fee is waived if the patient is referred to the emergency department). Usual co-pays apply under other plans.
Open Enrollment for Washington University employees is underway through Nov. 20. During this time, employees can enroll in or make changes to certain benefit plans.

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**Get your flu shot by Nov. 20**

There’s still time to get your flu shot by the Nov. 20 deadline. Two more vaccination events are being offered in the Eric P. Newman Education Center, Room 308-310:

- Nov. 9: 8 a.m.–12 p.m.
- Nov. 11: 12–3:30 p.m.

High-dose and single-dose vaccines are available. [Appointments required. Visit flu.wustl.edu](http://flu.wustl.edu) for more information, or email [fluvaccine@wustl.edu](mailto:fluvaccine@wustl.edu).

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*Falling leaves on the Danforth Campus*
Important numbers and links

- Call the BJC/WUSM employee hotline for COVID-19 exposure or illness: 314-362-5056
- Use this [online screening tool](https://coronavirus.med.wustl.edu) before reporting to work
- Know your [screening stations](https://coronavirus.med.wustl.edu)
- Review [inpatient protocol](https://coronavirus.med.wustl.edu)
- Review [ambulatory protocol](https://coronavirus.med.wustl.edu)
- Contact the Employee Assistance Program for 24/7 work-life support: 844-365-4587
- Email story ideas and requests to heroes@wustl.edu

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

To ensure that this newsletter is delivered to your inbox, add updates@wusm.wustl.edu to your address book.