Today's COVID-19 stats from BJH

106 inpatients confirmed positive  
9 admitted, awaiting test results

COVID-19 saliva test available for WUSM health-care workers and their families

In an effort to maintain the availability of the frontline workforce, the School of Medicine has made its COVID-19 saliva test available to WUSM health-care workers and their families.
Asymptomatic health-care workers who want to be tested — including residents and fellows employed by BJC HealthCare and students in the clinical environment — should visit the 1234 S. Kingshighway Blvd. site for exposure testing. Family members can receive symptomatic and exposure testing at the same site. The cost for the test is $50. Please sign up to schedule testing, and use your WUSTL key to register yourself or your family members. You may drive to the site or use the campus shuttle. Results are available within 24-48 hours.

All symptomatic employees, housestaff and students must continue to contact the COVID-19 hotline at 314-362-5056 or Student Health for instructions regarding testing.

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**CDC warns against Thanksgiving travel as coronavirus spread accelerates**

With Thanksgiving now just one week away, families are facing tough decisions as they navigate celebrating the holiday amidst a worsening pandemic — more than 1 million COVID-19 cases were reported in the U.S. over the last 7 days. Traditional Thanksgiving gatherings pose a heightened risk of COVID-19 transmission.

In its guidelines for celebrating Thanksgiving, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urges Americans against traveling as cases continue to increase
rapidly across the U.S. The best way to stay safe this year, the CDC says, is to stay home and celebrate with only those who live in your household. For those who plan to join family and friends from other households, the guidelines include tips to reduce risk while attending and hosting gatherings.

Understanding the risks of creating a COVID-19 pod

The most effective way to avoid exposure to COVID-19 is to avoid interactions with those who live outside of your household — especially if they occur indoors, in close proximity or without masks, according to Steve Lawrence, MD, associate professor of medicine. In some cases, he said, personal needs necessitate such interactions.

In a communication to students, Lawrence said that creating a COVID-19 pod (or bubble) that includes family, friends or colleagues has become a popular strategy for those who live alone or have close relationships with those outside their household. Within a pod, members accept the risk of interacting with each other — sometimes with less vigilance to masking and distancing. To create a pod that is as safe as possible, all members must agree to have close interactions only with those in their pod. If one member of the pod decides to interact with others outside
of the pod — by going to bars, dining indoors or having unmasked social gatherings — then the boundaries of the pod extend to all additional contacts, and the risk level is increased for everyone. While no pod is as safe as choosing to never spend time unmasked with people outside the household, the smaller the pod, the lower the risk — and in all instances they should not be larger than 10 people.

Minimize food-sharing risks

While COVID-19 is not a foodborne illness, food-sharing often poses other risks, such as close contact and handling of utensils. For this reason:

- Do not organize work potlucks, bring in cakes or other food to share or have shared candy dishes.
- If food is provided for any reason, social distancing of at least 6 feet should be maintained.
- Do not use shared serving utensils.
- If food is provided for a business purpose, prepackaged or boxed meals are preferred.
- Ensure hand sanitizer is available where the food is being served, and that
everyone performs hand hygiene prior to handling food or utensils.

- Limit table seating to one person unless individuals live in the same household or if spacing is at least six feet apart.

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**Podcast: Preparing for winter and the holidays under the shadow of COVID-19**

This episode of the "Show Me the Science" podcast focuses on ways to stay safe during the fast-approaching holiday season. As COVID-19 cases spike around the country, infectious disease experts at the School of Medicine say that many of our holiday traditions may be risky this year. They urge families and friends to have potentially difficult conversations about planning for the challenges of the next several weeks.

Andrew Janowski, MD, an instructor in pediatrics in the Division of Infectious Diseases, discusses the risks associated with cold weather, family gatherings and holiday traditions. Matifadza Hlatshwayo Davis, MD, a clinical instructor of medicine in the Division of Infectious Diseases, also offers her perspective on the pandemic's impact — as both a physician working on the frontlines with COVID-19 patients and a mother who welcomed her second child as the pandemic unfolded.
WUSM and BJC postpone some elective procedures and surgeries

Starting Monday, Nov. 16, some elective surgeries and procedures are being postponed to free staffing and bed capacity in anticipation of a dramatic surge in COVID-19 patient volumes. This proactive step is necessary to enable staff to be redeployed to areas of greatest need, as patient volume is expected to exceed the current staffing model. The impending surge demands an all-hands-on-deck strategy, where team members from all disciplines could be asked to fill gaps in both clinical and non-clinical areas. For the foreseeable future, a low-census scenario is highly unlikely.

COVID-19 vaccine critical to preventing deaths, delays in those with developmental disabilities
A recent New York Times article highlighted an analysis that determined developmental disabilities heighten the risk of COVID-19 death and explored how vaccines should be distributed to different populations. John Constantino, MD, the Blanche F. Ittleson Professor of Psychiatry, said that vaccination will play a broader role beyond preventing infection in people with developmental disabilities. It will be critical to resuming education and the full array of treatments and services for those with intellectual disabilities and developmental disorders, whose lives have been disrupted by the pandemic.

“We’ve watched young children with developmental delays who are going backward, losing skills and seeing their progress stall,” he says. “These are little kids in whom we’re trying to build developmental skills that will be with them for life.”

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**No changes to visitor policy at this time**

As COVID-19 patient numbers rise, the [visitor policy](#) continues to be evaluated to determine if further restrictions are needed. At this time, the Medical Campus will remain in Tier 2, allowing one visitor per patient in most circumstances. This takes into account the value of having loved ones present to support healing; the impact on patient experience; the relief provided to caregivers, who often fill the supportive roles of loved ones in their absence; and the safety measures currently in place (i.e., masking, temperature screening) that weren’t in place when visitors were restricted earlier this year. The visitor policy team will continue to improve the screening process and make adjustments based on the changing patient environment.

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**BJC and WashU send message to community in full-page ad**
BJC HealthCare and Washington University Physicians are asking for the community’s help to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Their message: We are still in this together — and we can make an impact.

The full-page ad — which ran Nov. 15 in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and appears in the St. Louis American today — emphasizes that simple protective measures like masking and social distancing are crucial to protecting our community until a vaccine is widely available.

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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
- Know your screening stations
- Review inpatient protocol
- Review ambulatory protocol
- Contact the Employee Assistance Program for 24/7 work-life support: 844-365-4587
- Email story ideas and requests to heroes@wustl.edu
To ensure that this newsletter is delivered to your inbox, add updates@wusm.wustl.edu to your address book.