

WashU Med COVID-19 Update

November 24, 2020

Information for School of Medicine faculty, staff and students

Today's COVID-19 stats from BJH

108 inpatients confirmed positive **10** admitted, awaiting test results

COVID-19 saliva test clarification: Available for asymptomatic health-care workers with known exposure



Last week's newsletter announced that the COVID-19 saliva test has been made available to WUSM's health-care workforce and their families. This week we'd like

to offer further clarification: The saliva test is now **available for asymptomatic health-care workers who have had a known exposure**, and symptomatic or exposed family members.

WUSM health-care workers — including any faculty, staff, residents, fellows or students who work in environments in which patient care takes place — and family members who meet the criteria above are eligible to receive the test. You must [sign up](#) and use your WUSTL key to register yourself or your family members before driving or taking a campus shuttle to the new testing site at 1234 S. Kingshighway Blvd. There is a \$50 fee for each test performed. 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.

For additional information, please read the [COVID-19 saliva testing FAQ](#).

COVID-19 testing can't guarantee a safe Thanksgiving



Although testing is an important tool for limiting the spread of COVID-19,

individuals can't rely on it to protect themselves and others when coming together to celebrate Thanksgiving.

A [recent Vox article](#) explains that scientists still haven't determined at what point of infection people start testing positive for SARS-CoV-2, making testing less accurate before symptoms begin. Diagnostic tests (both the slower, more common, viral genetic test — called RT-PCR — and the more rapid viral protein test, called an antigen test) are most accurate when used on people experiencing symptoms.

The safest way to celebrate this year is to stay home and celebrate only with those in your household. If your plans involve joining family and friends from other households, a negative test result should not be considered a green light to abandon proven mitigation measures such as masking and social distancing.

Eating indoors with others is driving COVID-19 transmission



COVID-19 cases are increasing significantly in the [St. Louis region](#) and [on the Danforth Campus](#). Contact tracing has indicated that a large number of cases are happening due to people eating together indoors. This behavior is risky even when

people gather in small groups and wear masks while not eating or drinking.

While it is difficult to be separated from friends and colleagues, we must continue to take all precautions to avoid COVID-19 transmission, including not eating with others in the same indoor space. When finding a space to eat alone is not possible, it's important to stagger eating times so that only one person is unmasked at a time, and always maintain more than six feet of distance.

\$5 million testing grant to address COVID-19 impact on Special School District

Researchers at the School of Medicine [have received a two-year, \\$5 million grant](#) allowing them to offer 50,000 saliva tests for the SARS-CoV-2 virus to students, teachers and staff in schools operated by the Special School District of St. Louis County.

The pandemic has disproportionately impacted students with special needs, especially those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, in part because they rely on daily structure and in-person support for learning and social growth. Many of these students also have underlying medical conditions that pose a heightened risk for the development of COVID-19 and severe complications of the virus.

“It is a major priority to get children with disabilities back into the schools while providing a safe environment for the students and staff,” said Jason Newland, MD, co-principal investigator of the grant and a professor of pediatrics in the Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases. “A key component of achieving this goal in this vulnerable population is ample testing that can rapidly detect COVID-19 infections within the school community.”

Help lead the battle against COVID-19's spread

Throughout this pandemic, you have answered the call for our patients and community. Now, we are calling on you to battle the current spread of COVID-19. Together, we will fight it in

our breakrooms. We will fight it in our hallways.
We will fight it on the home front.

Team members are aware of the importance of masks, social distancing and other safety precautions. But as the months drag on, we are all feeling battle worn — at work and at home.

We can't give up the fight. Now is the time to come together, for ourselves, our patients, and our colleagues. It's time for a new battle plan. And we need all hands on deck.



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

For Medical Campus updates, visit coronavirus.med.wustl.edu »

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