

## WashU Med COVID-19 Update

January 21, 2021

Information for School of Medicine faculty, staff and students

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

**84** inpatients confirmed positive      **4** admitted, awaiting test results

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### COVID-19 vaccine now available to all WUSM and BJC employees



COVID-19 vaccine appointments are now available to all BJC and School of Medicine employees, including those who work from home. Employees are strongly encouraged to receive the vaccine. While the vaccine is not required, this

is a valuable opportunity to be protected against COVID-19.

All medical school employees should have received an email invitation to schedule an appointment to receive the vaccine. If you have not received an email invitation yet and want to get the shot, please contact [covidvaccine@wustl.edu](mailto:covidvaccine@wustl.edu).

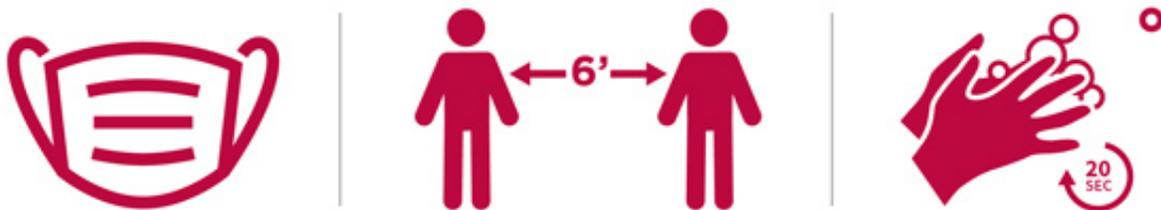
**Do not forward the scheduling link you receive** — it is for you only, and you will need to sign in with your WUSTL key to schedule a vaccine appointment.

Employees who have recovered from COVID-19 should still be vaccinated and can sign up for a vaccine appointment. Please keep in mind:

- If you have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days, you should wait to be vaccinated until you are outside of the isolation period and have recovered, so as not to expose anyone else while you might still be contagious.
- While people who have tested positive for COVID-19 are considered highly unlikely to be reinfected for at least 90 days and can choose to safely delay vaccination, you are eligible to be vaccinated now while the vaccine is easily available to employees.

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## Getting vaccinated doesn't change need for preventive measures



It is important to continue with safety precautions, including wearing masks, washing hands and physical distancing, after receiving the vaccine. Health experts have stressed that taking the vaccine will not immediately result in immunity to the virus and — while the vaccine will likely protect you from experiencing symptoms — you could contract the virus and potentially be a carrier.

“The vaccine is a critical part of managing COVID. However, individual vaccination

— even in a majority of our employees — does not alter our current public health practices,” said Eva Aagaard, MD, senior associate dean for education. “COVID can still spread amongst those who are unvaccinated and while we know the vaccine is highly effective at preventing symptomatic and severe illness, its impact on asymptomatic transmission remains unclear. It is critically important to continue to wear your mask, complete your symptom screening, and maintain social distancing and hand hygiene both on campus and off.”

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## Missouri plans mass vaccination sites as next phase begins



Gov. Mike Parson announced Wednesday that the Missouri National Guard will partner with the state's health department to create mass vaccination sites across the state by the end of the month. The sites, expected to be located in each of the nine Missouri State Highway Patrol regions, will have the capacity to administer 2,500 vaccinations per day.

Missouri entered the next phase of COVID-19 vaccinations on Monday, Jan. 18, making it possible for almost 3 million more Missourians — those ages 65 and older and adults with underlying health conditions that put them at high risk of

COVID-19 complications — to get vaccinated. Illinois will enter its next phase on Monday, Jan. 25.

For more information about eligibility and availability, please visit the [Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services](#) and [Illinois Department of Public Health](#) websites.

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## **Vaccine pre-registration for the public available online with BJC and Washington University Physicians**

The public may now [pre-register online](#) for vaccination with BJC HealthCare and Washington University Physicians. People who pre-register will be contacted when their eligibility window opens and the vaccine is available.

Many counties and other health systems are also offering pre-registration. It is recommended that individuals pre-register on multiple sites and accept the first opportunity provided to receive a vaccine.

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## **Rapid blood test identifies COVID-19 patients at high risk of severe disease**



One of the most vexing aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic is doctors' inability to predict which newly hospitalized patients will go on to develop severe disease. Now, scientists at the School of Medicine have shown that a relatively simple and rapid blood test can predict — within a day of a hospital admission — which patients with COVID-19 are at highest risk of serious complications or death.

The test measures levels of mitochondrial DNA, an indicator of tissue damage, in the blood. Researchers found that levels were much higher in patients who eventually were admitted to the ICU, intubated or died. This association held independently of a patient's age, sex and underlying health conditions.

“Doctors need better tools to evaluate the status of COVID-19 patients as early as possible because many of the treatments — such as monoclonal antibodies — are in short supply, and we know that some patients will get better without intensive treatments,” said co-senior author Andrew E. Gelman, PhD, the Jacqueline G. and William E. Maritz Endowed Chair in Immunology and Oncology in the Department of Surgery.

The study, published Jan. 14 in JCI Insight, involved nearly 100 patients newly admitted to the hospital with COVID-19.

Learn more on the [School of Medicine website](#).

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## **COVID-19 impact on pregnant women focus of NIH grant**



Researchers at the School of Medicine have received a grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to study factors that keep pregnant women from getting tested for COVID-19, to evaluate whether it is important to test women regularly during their pregnancies, and to determine whether pregnant women with COVID-19 need more specialized prenatal care.

The study is part of the NIH's national initiative, Rapid Accelerations of Diagnostics for Underserved Populations, or RADx-UP, with a goal of increasing access to COVID-19 testing in vulnerable populations.

“Although pregnant women with COVID-19 are more likely to be asymptomatic initially, they are at risk for more severe disease,” said Megan Foeller, MD, co-principal investigator of the study and assistant professor of obstetrics & gynecology. “We think it is important to determine the impact of COVID-19 among this unique population, improve testing access and find ways to improve the prenatal care offered to these mothers, with the goal of reducing their risk of complications.”

Learn more on the [School of Medicine website](#).

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**WUSM infectious disease specialist on COVID-19**

## variants



New variants of COVID-19 have been identified in Illinois and, as a result, likely already are circulating in Missouri, according to Hilary Babcock, MD, professor of medicine. The new variants will spread more easily and make more people sick, but current vaccines appear to protect against them.

In a [recent KSDK story](#), Babcock stressed the importance of people continuing to follow public health recommendations while waiting for vaccines. "Masks work against all of these variants, and keeping that six foot distance between you and others," she said. "Now is not the time to relax. Now is the time to sort of buckle down and stay strong and hold on."

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### In memory of a loved one lost to COVID-19



Angela Kender lays a flower heart at Hope Plaza in honor of her mother, Gaye Griffin-Snyder, who died of COVID-19 in June at Barnes-Jewish Hospital. Kender wanted to show appreciation to the health-care workers that treated her, including nurse practitioner Lauren Lynch, who was with her when she died.

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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
- View WUSM [employee and student testing data](#)
- Email story ideas and requests to [heroes@wustl.edu](mailto:heroes@wustl.edu)

For Medical Campus updates, visit [covid19.med.wustl.edu](https://covid19.med.wustl.edu) »

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