

## WashU Med COVID-19 Update

February 4, 2021

Information for School of Medicine faculty, staff and students

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

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

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### Update on WashU Med and BJC employee vaccinations



As of Tuesday, 44,124 employees across BJC HealthCare and Washington University School of Medicine have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 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).

As BJC and WashU Med transition to vaccinating members of the public, there will be less availability for employees. If you plan to be vaccinated, please be aware that first-dose appointments for employees are available through Friday, Feb. 12, while second-dose appointments are available through March 4. **If you want to get a vaccine using the current self-scheduling process, you must get your first shot by Feb. 12.**

First-dose opportunities between February 12 and March 4 will depend on supply and may vary. Starting March 17, vaccination clinics will be held weekly for first and second doses for new hires, and others who were not able to schedule during the 1A priority phase. Times and locations for the weekly clinics are still being finalized.

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## BJC hospitals part of state effort to ramp up community vaccinations

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services said Monday it would distribute more than half of the state's weekly COVID-19 vaccine to hospitals capable of rapidly administering vaccinations on a large scale, and nearly a quarter to [mass vaccination events](#) coordinated with the National Guard.

The selected hospitals — which in the St. Louis region include those part of BJC HealthCare, SSM Health, Mercy, St. Luke's Hospital — as well as the St. Louis County Health Department each have the capacity to administer 5,000 vaccine doses per week. The vaccines will be available to eligible groups throughout February.

In the past week, BJC and WashU Med have successfully opened community vaccination sites on the Medical Campus and on the Christian Hospital campus. A third site is planned for Memorial Hospital Belleville in mid-February.

BJC has administered more than 68,000 vaccines (including first and second



doses) and pre-registered more than 314,000 people to receive vaccines.

## **Pre-registration for vaccines**

Members of the public are encouraged to pre-register with multiple providers and take the first opportunity to be vaccinated. Those without online access should call 314-273-1252. Due to high demand, telephone wait times can be lengthy, so it is recommended to [pre-register online](#) when possible.

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## **WashU Med study examining COVID-19 vaccine responses in people with autoimmune diseases**



School of Medicine researchers are leading a clinical trial to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines in people taking immunosuppressive drugs. Such drugs often are prescribed to treat autoimmune diseases, including arthritis, Crohn's disease and psoriasis. However, the drugs may blunt the body's antibody response to vaccines.

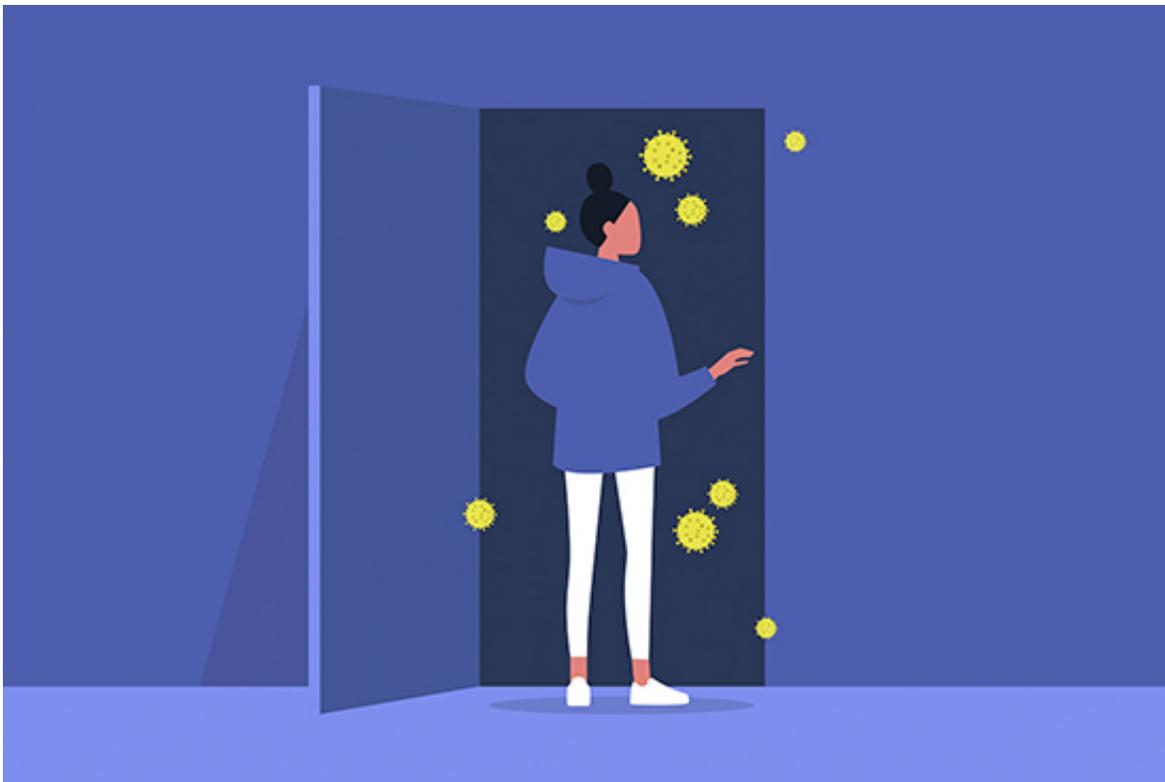
“In this group of patients, our team will be evaluating the quantity and quality of the antibody response normally generated from COVID-19 vaccines,” said Alfred Kim, MD, PhD, assistant professor of medicine, who is leading the trial. “These are important questions because many people with autoimmune diseases need these medications to stay in remission.”

Researchers will enroll up to 500 adults ages 18 and older in the St. Louis region. They are recruiting health-care workers at the School of Medicine and patients seen in Washington University outpatient clinics. Eligible patients who have [pre-registered](#) for the COVID-19 vaccine will be contacted to assess their interest in being recruited into the study.

For information about participating in the trial, email [covaripad@wustl.edu](mailto:covaripad@wustl.edu), or contact either Alia El-Qunni at 314-249-1151 or Lily McMorrow at 314-280-3894.

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## Podcast: Improving health messaging in fight to slow COVID-19



In the latest episode of the [“Show Me the Science” podcast](#), you’ll hear how focused marketing and health communication could influence more people to willingly comply with public health measures such as wearing masks, avoiding crowds, maintaining physical distance and regularly washing their hands. Mary C. Politi, PhD, a health psychologist and a professor in the Division of Public Health Sciences in the Department of Surgery, and Robyn LeBoeuf, PhD, a professor of marketing at the university’s Olin Business School, discuss how our biases, judgments and health behaviors might be shaped — or even changed — by

targeted, consistent messages from health-care providers and government leaders.

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## Vaccinating kids could be key to reducing COVID-19 transmission



The main argument for broadly vaccinating children against COVID-19 — once a vaccine is available for those under age 16 — is that doing so is likely to reduce disease transmission, according to a [recent article in The Atlantic](#). Jason Newland, MD, professor of pediatrics, emphasized that if school buildings reopen without masking and social distancing, they essentially will be hosting mass gatherings of unvaccinated people.

“Guess who’s going to end up having it? All the kids. And those kids with certain underlying conditions are disproportionately impacted. Children could pass it on to Grandma and Grandpa. They can pass it onto another loved one who has diabetes or has obesity or has chronic kidney disease” and is not yet vaccinated, he said.

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## Coronavirus variants producing more transmissible pathogen, surge in infections



Since it was first detected in China in 2019, the new coronavirus — like all viruses — has undergone changes to the underlying genetic code that determines its structure and behavior. As surging infection rates in the U.K., Brazil and South Africa suggest, alterations seen in recent variants can produce a more transmissible pathogen, according to a [recent Wall Street Journal article](#).

Sean Whelan, PhD, the Marvin A. Brennecke Distinguished Professor and head of the Department of Molecular Microbiology, said scientists are seeing exactly what they expect to see. “The surface proteins of the virus are under tremendous pressure to change,” Whelan said. “All the virus really cares about is multiplying. If it can get into the cells of the [host] and avoid the immune system of that host, it will multiply. Whether it causes disease is a different question.”

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## **WashU Med participates in Janssen vaccine trial**

Johnson & Johnson recently announced that its single-shot COVID-19 vaccine was 66% effective overall at preventing moderate to severe illness, and much more protective — 85% — against the most serious symptoms.

In a [recent KSDK story](#), Rachel Presti, MD, PhD, who led a testing site for the Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson's phase 3 COVID-19 investigational vaccine clinical trial at the School of Medicine, said preventing severe cases of COVID-19 is the important goal and that a great analogy is people getting a milder case of the flu even though they got a flu shot. "If we keep people out of the hospital, if we can turn this into an inconvenience and not a risk to life, I think that's really a big win," said Presti, also an associate professor of medicine and medical director of [Washington University's Infectious Diseases Clinical Research Unit](#).

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**Safety signage available to download**

# Keep your distance

Practice physical distancing and maintain at least 6 feet from others.

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*Keeping You Safe*

 Washington University in St. Louis  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

A new series of safety signage, including some specifically for labs, is available to download [in Box](#).

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## Important numbers and links

- Call the BJC/WashU Med 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 WashU Med [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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