WashU Med COVID-19 Update

February 18, 2021

Information for School of Medicine faculty, staff and students

Today's COVID-19 stats from BJH

49 inpatients confirmed positive  1 admitted, awaiting test results

Contact Occupational Health to schedule vaccine

If you have received your first dose of vaccine but have not yet scheduled your second dose, or would like to schedule your first dose, please contact Occupational Health at covidvaccine@wustl.edu as soon as possible to schedule. Both doses are necessary to reach full protection, and having up-to-date schedule
records for our employees will enable us to better manage ongoing supply.

---

**CDC relaxes quarantine guidelines for those fully vaccinated**

Quarantine requirements for WashU Med employees who have been fully vaccinated have been relaxed following last week's updated guidance from the CDC. If you have had close contact to a person with COVID-19, you do not need to stay home if you:

- are fully vaccinated — it has been 14 days since you received your second dose of a two-dose series;
- received the last dose of the vaccine within three months of the exposure; AND
- have remained asymptomatic since exposure.

However, you must still call the COVID-19 Exposure/Illness Hotline at 314-362-5056 for guidance and follow the instructions you receive.

While the vaccine’s efficacy in preventing severe illness for those vaccinated is documented, it is not yet fully understood how well it prevents transmission of COVID-19 to others. It is still critically important to continue safety practices to protect those around you — wearing masks, practicing social distance, avoiding crowds and washing your hands.

---

**Plans underway for pediatric COVID-19 vaccine trials**

Washington University pediatric infectious diseases doctors plan to launch clinical trials this spring at St. Louis Children’s Hospital to evaluate COVID-19 vaccines in children. While children are far less likely than adults to become seriously ill from COVID-19, they still can spread the virus. The trials will help determine how well the immune systems of children respond to coronavirus vaccines that have been shown to be safe and effective in adults. The researchers have created an [online](#)
registry for families interested in enrolling their children, according to David Hunstad, MD, director of pediatric infectious diseases. See related story in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

Podcast: Maintaining mental health as the pandemic enters its second year

The latest episode of the “Show Me the Science” podcast focuses on the stresses that confront health professionals during a protracted pandemic — and what they can do to avoid burnout. You’ll hear from Jessica Gold, MD, assistant professor of psychiatry, who speaks about maintaining mental health as the pandemic continues into a second year. She’s given several lectures to health-care providers about the need to remember that, though their first instincts as caregivers may be to help others, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of self-care too.

Resident physician Mohit Harsh, MD, says that after hearing one of Gold’s talks, he realized his feelings of hopelessness might be more than fatigue. He has since received therapy and feels that he’s better able to take care of his patients now that he’s taking better care of himself.
A recent article in The New York Times Magazine addressed the long-running debate about whether students should learn in person or remotely during the pandemic. According to the article, some states, including Missouri, hoped to make schools function more smoothly by introducing what is known as a modified quarantine. Districts in that state could choose to forgo quarantines from school for students who came in contact with someone who tested positive, provided both parties were wearing masks. Rachel Orscheln, MD, associate professor of pediatrics, believes the data justifies the policy in some communities, provided schools continue to monitor COVID-19 cases and, she said, “quickly respond if they see some kind of breakdown.”

The CDC also currently is conducting a study to try to answer the question of whether quarantining, when all parties had been wearing masks, measurably reduces transmission rates. Jason Newland, MD, professor of pediatrics, has been involved in this research in Missouri schools — including schools with those modified quarantine policies. “So far, the preliminary data suggests that transmission remains low,” he said.
Antibody-based drugs have been authorized for emergency use in COVID-19 patients by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In a recent study, WashU Med researchers discovered that a complex set of interactions between antibodies and other elements of the immune system — collectively known as antibody effector functions — are a crucial part of the effectiveness of such treatments. The findings, available online in the journal Cell, could help scientists improve the next generation of antibody-based COVID-19 drugs.

“Some of the companies removed the effector functions from their antibodies, and other companies are trying to optimize the effector functions,” said senior author Michael Diamond, MD, PhD, the Herbert S. Gasser Professor of Medicine. “Based on our findings, if you have a potently neutralizing antibody without effector functions and you give it before infection, as a preventive, it will probably work. But if you give it after infection [as a treatment], it won’t work well; you need to optimize effector functions to get maximal benefit.”

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

---

**Volunteers needed at all public COVID-19 vaccination sites**
Clinical research student Hamza Jalal sets up appointments for second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine at the Eric P. Newman Education Center.

All three of BJC’s public COVID-19 vaccination sites have staffing openings for clinical and non-clinical work. Non-clinical staff are needed to assist with patient check-in, data entry and appointment scheduling. Training will be provided. Volunteers can sign up for shifts in Missouri at the Medical Campus or Christian Hospital campus locations, or sign up for shifts in Illinois at Memorial Hospital Belleville. The need for volunteers is most urgent at the Christian Hospital site.
WashU Med and BJC employees receive the COVID-19 vaccine at the Eric P. Newman Education Center on the Medical Campus. Visit Facebook and search “WUSTL vaccine” to add a “COVID-19 Vaccinated!” frame to your profile photo.

---

**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](https://covid19.med.wustl.edu)
- 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)

To ensure that this newsletter is delivered to your inbox, add [update@wusm.wustl.edu](mailto:update@wusm.wustl.edu) to your address book.