Today's COVID-19 stats from BJH

37 inpatients confirmed positive    5 admitted, awaiting test results

CDC issues new guidance for people fully vaccinated against COVID-19

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Monday released new guidance that allows fully vaccinated individuals to gather with other fully vaccinated individuals without masks in personal and home environments. An individual is considered fully vaccinated if they are two weeks past their second dose in a two-dose regimen (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna), or two weeks past a
single-dose regimen (Johnson & Johnson/Janssen).

Work and educational settings are not considered personal or home; they are public settings. Full protective measures are still required on our campus because not all personnel have been vaccinated and not everyone’s vaccination status is known. If you’ve been fully vaccinated, continue taking precautions in public spaces (including all campus and work spaces) by wearing a mask, social distancing and washing your hands.

__WashU Med faculty reflect on year of COVID-19__

In the year since COVID-19 became a pandemic, health-care workers and scientists have been challenged like never before. WashU Med mobilized quickly to battle the virus on multiple fronts, said William Powderly, MD, the Larry J. Shapiro Director of the Institute for Public Health, the J. William Campbell Professor of Medicine, and co-director of the Division of Infectious Diseases at the School of Medicine.

“The teamwork and commitment to public health and to clinical and translational research I’ve seen have been tremendous,” Powderly said. “We’ve learned a great deal about this virus in the past year, with perhaps the most important lesson that we can’t let our guard down yet. We still have work to do.”

For a broad overview of the school’s response to the pandemic, visit COVID-19: One Year Later.

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### Tightly fitted masks boost COVID-19 protection up to 95%

*The CDC recommends using a mask with a nose wire and checking to be sure that your mask fits snugly against the sides of your face without gaps to minimize air leakage.*

The CDC’s [revised mask guidelines](#) offer tips for tightening the fit of cloth and disposable masks to boost COVID-19 protection. [New research](#) found that infectious aerosol exposure decreased by about 95% when masks were tightly fitted, providing roughly the same level of protection as an N95 respirator.

The recommendations include:

- selecting masks with a nose wire
- using a mask fitter over a disposable or cloth mask
- checking that mask fits snugly with no gaps
- adding layers of material (three or more)
- knotting and tucking ear loops

To keep our staff protected at work, continue current practices and wear a multi-layer, well-fitting mask that covers the nose, mouth and chin, at all times.
The generic drug fluvoxamine was developed 40 years ago as an antidepressant and has been primarily used to treat obsessive-compulsive disorder. A recent 60 Minutes segment highlighted how a small but ingenious School of Medicine clinical trial — led by Eric Lenze, MD, the Wallace and Lucille K. Renard Professor of Psychiatry, and Angela Reiersen, MD, an associate professor of psychiatry — and a series of coincidences have led scientists to look closely at fluvoxamine as a possible tool to keep newly diagnosed COVID-19 patients from becoming severely ill. Results from an expanded clinical trial are expected in April.

Francis Collins, MD, director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), lauded the researchers for their initiative. “The whole scientific community is watching [this] study and trying to see whether there's a way we can help in our own trials,” Collins said. “We're strongly considering adding an arm to one of those trials to test fluvoxamine.”

St. Louis City and County loosen COVID-19 restrictions on businesses and gatherings
In response to declining COVID-19 cases and increased vaccine availability, St. Louis County on Monday eased certain restrictions that were put in place to prevent the spread of the virus.

Under the revised guidelines:

- All businesses can stay open until midnight.
- Indoor banquet and conference centers can operate at 25% capacity.
- Outdoor event venues can have 50% capacity with social distancing.
- Sporting venues can submit a plan to the county for approval.

In addition, a new St. Louis city order allows bars, restaurants and nightclubs to remain open until midnight.

Visit the St. Louis County and St. Louis city websites for more information.

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Podcast: Loss of smell, heart problems common symptoms for long-haulers
The latest “Show Me the Science” podcast focuses on WashU Med physicians’ efforts to help “long-haulers” — patients with lingering problems following COVID-19. In this episode, ear, nose and throat specialist Jay Piccirillo, MD, a professor of otolaryngology and the Department of Otolaryngology’s vice chair for research, discusses several studies he’s conducting to try to help long-haulers regain the ability to smell.

The episode also features cardiologist Amanda Verma, MD, an assistant professor of medicine, who normally works with very sick patients with advanced heart disease. Over the last year, she’s seen many long-haul patients who have developed problems such as fatigue, shortness of breath, rapid pounding of the heart, and chest pain.

Submit staff service award nominations by March 24
Despite the enormous challenges we have faced over the last year, WashU Med persevered, finding new ways to carry out its mission to improve and save lives. You have given so much of yourselves during this time, and the university is grateful for your resilience and adaptability.

If you know a colleague who really stands out, here is a chance to give him or her special recognition. Nomination forms for the Dean's Distinguished Service Award, Research Support Award, Operations Staff Award, and Kelley Mullen Clinical Service Award are being accepted until March 24. Please review information on these awards and take this opportunity to help recognize deserving staff members.

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**Visitor policy updates for pediatric patients**

In partnership with the Department of Pediatrics and infection prevention experts, St. Louis Children's Hospital is making the following change to its visitor policy for outpatient clinics and ambulatory visits, effective immediately.

- Two caregiver visitors will be allowed in the clinic unless other arrangements have been made prior to the visit.
- Young children/siblings may also accompany a patient’s two designated caregivers if childcare is not available.
- Any person over the age of two should bring and wear a mask at all times. Masks will be supplied for visitors who do not bring one.
The hospital says the change is being made because it better meets the needs of patients and families and because it can be implemented in a way that maintains the safety of patients, families and staff.

**Personal losses motivate action**

Tyrone Simpkins, a sergeant with BJC HealthCare security, and infectious diseases specialist Hilary Babcock, MD, MPH, share their COVID-19 vaccination stories in a [new video](#) produced by the Office of Medical Public Affairs.

**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

For Medical Campus updates, visit covid19.med.wustl.edu »

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