WashU Med COVID-19 Update

April 29, 2021

Information for School of Medicine faculty, staff and students

Today's COVID-19 stats from BJH

47 inpatients confirmed positive  3 admitted, awaiting test results

CDC loosens outdoor masking guidelines

In new guidance released Tuesday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that **fully vaccinated people in the U.S.** can participate in most personal outdoor activities without a mask, including:
Walking, running, hiking or biking outdoors alone, with members of their household or with small groups of vaccinated individuals
Attending small outdoor gatherings with fully vaccinated family and friends

The CDC stresses that everyone — fully vaccinated or not — should keep wearing masks at public and crowded outdoor gatherings such as concerts or sporting events.

“To protect patients and unvaccinated individuals, we encourage mask wearing outdoors on the Medical Campus whenever others are around and closer than six feet. We are investigating how this guidance may impact small Washington University-sponsored activities,” said Eva Aagaard, MD, interim senior administrator for occupational health. “We will reach out when and if any changes in the current guidance go into effect.”

For more information, visit the [CDC website (PDF)](https://www.cdc.gov).

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WashU Med resuming use of J&J vaccine per CDC, FDA recommendation; Pfizer also available

Last week the CDC and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommended resuming use of the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine after a temporary
pause. Going forward, WashU Med will offer faculty, staff and students who remain unvaccinated the opportunity to choose either the single-dose J&J vaccine or the Pfizer vaccine, which requires two doses administered about 21 days apart. An email explaining scheduling and availability for both vaccines will be sent to all individuals for whom we do not have a record of vaccination. If you receive this email, please upload your documentation for vaccination even if you received your vaccine from WashU or BJC HealthCare.

Upcoming first-dose vaccination dates at BJC Institute of Health (425 S. Euclid Ave.):

- May 3 (J&J), 8:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.
- May 5 (Pfizer), 8:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- May 14 (J&J), 8:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Email covidvaccine@wustl.edu or pre-register online for an invitation to schedule a vaccination appointment. To learn more about the vaccines available, read the J&J fact sheet (PDF) and the Pfizer fact sheet (PDF).

Alternatively, WashU Med/BJC continues to offer community vaccination clinics throughout the greater St. Louis region. You can schedule an appointment at a community clinic; select locations offer walk-in appointments.

Students required to receive COVID-19 vaccine before returning to campus in fall

Washington University students on the Danforth and Medical campuses must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 before they arrive on campus for the start of their fall academic term or August 30, whichever comes first. This new requirement, communicated to students in an email Wednesday, is part of an overall strategy to keep our community safe and allow us to resume many of our regular, on-campus activities this fall.

The university will allow exemptions for students who are unable to receive the vaccine for religious or medical reasons. Students who cannot get the vaccine prior to arrival will receive assistance with identifying opportunities to get the
vaccine locally, including at the School of Medicine and BJC. More information will be provided to students in the coming weeks.

Open scheduling for public COVID-19 vaccination; walk-ins available at select locations

BJC has completed sending vaccine invitations to those who pre-registered through its website. With all Missouri residents ages 16 and older eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, individuals can now schedule appointments at a time and location of their choice directly through the BJC vaccine website. Walk-in appointments are also available at BJC’s public vaccine clinics located on the Medical Campus and Christian Hospital.

For more information, visit the WashU Med COVID-19 website.

WashU Med clinical trial to evaluate COVID-19 vaccine breakthrough cases
A small percentage of people fully vaccinated against COVID-19 still will develop the illness. These are called “vaccine breakthrough cases.” The St. Louis County Department of Public Health recently identified 71 people who tested positive for COVID-19 after they were fully vaccinated, as reported in this KSDK story.

Rachel Presti, MD, PhD, associate professor of medicine, and her WashU Med colleagues, are trying to figure out who is more likely to develop a breakthrough case. They have started a clinical trial in which participants provide blood samples so the researchers can determine which virus variant the study participants had and to study how participants’ immune systems worked against the virus. The researchers are still gathering data, but Presti’s confidence in the vaccine remains high.

“The 95% efficacy isn’t 100% efficacy, and so people do get infected,” Presti said. “What we’re hearing so far is really reassuring that the vaccines do work. We still recommend highly that people get vaccinated.”

Urgent need for volunteers at vaccine clinics next week
With COVID-19 vaccination appointments now available through the university for all **students, faculty, staff and family members ages 18 and over**, we are in need of volunteers to help staff the vaccination clinic on the Medical Campus, with a critical need for next week. Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to sign up by filling out the **clinic volunteer form** online. You do not need to have clinical experience to volunteer as we are also in need of administrative support.

Shifts are available at multiple locations, but vaccination of WashU faculty, staff, students and families is occurring in the BJC Institute of Health on the Medical Campus. To sign up to help at the Medical Campus location, select “IOH (Employee site at Medical School)” in the Preferred Vaccine Clinic Location section of the form. You also will be asked if you have access to Epic — the electronic medical records system. (Epic knowledge is not needed at the IOH site.) Just click “no” if you are not familiar with Epic.

Thank you for your help!

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**New hours for WashU Med’s COVID-19 saliva testing**

The hours for COVID-19 saliva testing at the 1234 S. Kingshighway location have changed. Appointments are now available Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 7 a.m. – 3 p.m,
with the last appointment at 2:30 p.m. This does not impact student testing at Mudd Field.

Employees and students who are symptomatic or have a known exposure: Do not use the saliva test. Instead, call the COVID-19 Exposure/Illness Hotline, 314-362-5056, for a testing referral.

To learn more about saliva testing, visit the WashU Med COVID-19 website.

COVID-19 survivors have increased risk of death, illness six months after diagnosis

A new study from WashU Med shows that even mild cases of COVID-19 increase the risk of death in the six months following diagnosis and that this risk increases with disease severity. The comprehensive study, reported in the New York Times, also catalogues the wide-ranging and long-term health problems often triggered by the infection, even among those not hospitalized.

Senior author Ziyad Al-Aly, MD, an assistant professor of medicine, says the
research linking many diseases with COVID-19 signals long-term complications for patients and a massive health burden for years to come. “Physicians must be vigilant in evaluating people who have had COVID-19,” Al-Aly said. “These patients will need integrated, multidisciplinary care.”

Podcast: A year later, scientists recall efforts to jump-start research into mysterious new coronavirus

The latest episode of the ‘Show Me the Science’ podcast features WashU Med scientists Sean Whelan, PhD, and Michael Diamond, MD, PhD, who teamed up early in the pandemic to study the coronavirus — ramping up research efforts while the rest of the world was shutting down. They have since developed vaccines, including a nasal vaccine that now is in early human trials, and created model viruses that allow researchers to safely study how the virus infects cells.

“I arrived in St. Louis on the 4th of January, 2020, and ran into Mike … and asked, ‘Are you interested in this coronavirus that’s emerging in Wuhan, China?’” said Whelan. “I certainly didn’t expect this pandemic to become what it became.”
A new study by WashU Med maternal-fetal medicine researchers shows that the novel coronavirus infects maternal and fetal cells in the placenta and alters the balance of hormones that regulate blood pressure. This finding, published in the journal Med, helps explain why coronavirus infection has been linked to serious pregnancy complications, such as preeclampsia, that threaten the health of both mother and fetus.

Senior author Indira Mysorekar, PhD, the James P. Crane Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology and director of the Center for Reproductive Health Sciences, says the study “provides a foundation to design rigorous studies to confirm the effects of COVID-19 on pregnancy and assess treatment strategies, such as targeting blood pressure regulatory systems to prevent pregnancy complications in infected women.”
Danforth Campus student Julian McCall took advantage of the opportunity to get his first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine on the Medical Campus.

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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

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