Today's COVID-19 stats from BJH

24 inpatients confirmed positive  5 admitted, awaiting test results

WashU Med continues to require masking in most campus spaces

Following last week's updated guidance for fully vaccinated individuals from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), WashU Med has revised its own
COVID-19 activity recommendations — including continued masking in most campus spaces.

Although faculty, staff and students have achieved an impressive vaccination rate over 80%, the rate in St. Louis remains well below “herd immunity.” On the Medical Campus, specifically, many in our patient population and work environment are immune-compromised or otherwise at risk of severe COVID-19 infection or lack of immune response to the vaccine.

To protect these vulnerable individuals, WashU Med will continue to require masking regardless of immunization status in:

- All hospitals and clinical spaces, including any spaces where there are patient or research participant interactions
- Public spaces (lobbies, open spaces, walkways, classrooms/events/meetings of more than 30 people)

In private or semi-private environments (offices, private meeting spaces, break rooms, labs, classrooms/events/meetings of 30 or fewer people), masking is required only for those who are not fully vaccinated.

People may choose to remain masked and distanced for any number of reasons regardless of immunization status; a person's decision to wear a mask should not be interpreted as a choice to remain unvaccinated.

For more information about WashU Med’s response to the updated CDC guidelines, please visit the WashU Med COVID-19 website.

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**Domestic business travel resumes at WashU Med**
WashU Med’s updated activity guidelines allow work-related domestic travel to resume. Work-related international travel, though, still requires approval based on consideration of COVID-19 conditions in the destination country and essentiality of the travel. Approval for international travel should occur at the department or unit level with input from the International Travel Oversight Committee (ITOC). Contact itoc@wustl.edu with any questions.

Podcast: What to make of CDC’s new masking guidelines
The latest episode of the “Show Me the Science” podcast focuses on the CDC’s new masking guidelines. Guest William G. Powderly, MD, the Larry J. Shapiro Director of the Institute for Public Health and co-director of the Division of Infectious Diseases at WashU Med, says the new guidelines provide evidence that, for many fully vaccinated individuals, going without a mask indoors is fairly safe — thanks to highly effective vaccines.

But Powderly also says people need to remain aware that the pandemic isn’t over, and that the CDC may need to change its recommendations again at some point. **On the Medical Campus, masks will still be required in public areas in hospitals and in clinical areas.**

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**WashU Med/BJC providing COVID-19 vaccine to kids 12 and up**

Adolescents ages 12 and up can now receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine at BJC HealthCare and WashU Med vaccination sites. In this video, produced by the Office of Medical Public Affairs, 14-year-old Alexis Portell says, “There’s so many traditions that I missed out on this year. … I want to protect everyone else, and I want to have a normal summer and a normal school year next year.”
Updated guidance for N95 respirator use

N95 respirators will no longer be re-used more than one day. However, clinical staff should continue to extend their use by wearing the same N95 for repeated close encounters with several different patients without removing in between, as long as the respirator maintains its fit and function and has not been used for an aerosol-generating procedure. The N95 should be discarded upon removal.

Research finds vaccines not as effective for the immunosuppressed

In millions of immunosuppressed Americans, the COVID-19 vaccine may not generate enough antibodies to protect them from the disease.

Alfred Kim, MD, assistant professor of medicine, led a WashU Med trial that
evaluated antibody responses generated from vaccines in people taking immunosuppressants for autoimmune conditions. Although the majority of participants generated an antibody response, about 15 percent had very blunted or undetectable responses — posing a dilemma for physicians on how to advise these patients in the months ahead.

“Right now, we’re telling them to pretend they weren’t vaccinated,” Kim said to the Washington Post. “That is the easiest solution but it’s only a short-term one. The step beyond is: What do we do to mitigate this?”

Spring is in full bloom on the Medical Campus as people walk through Hope Plaza.

**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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