

WashU Med COVID-19 Update

Jan. 6, 2022

Information for School of Medicine faculty, staff and students

Our numbers

COVID-19 hospitalizations

Barnes-Jewish Hospital

167 inpatients confirmed

St. Louis Children's Hospital

54 inpatients confirmed

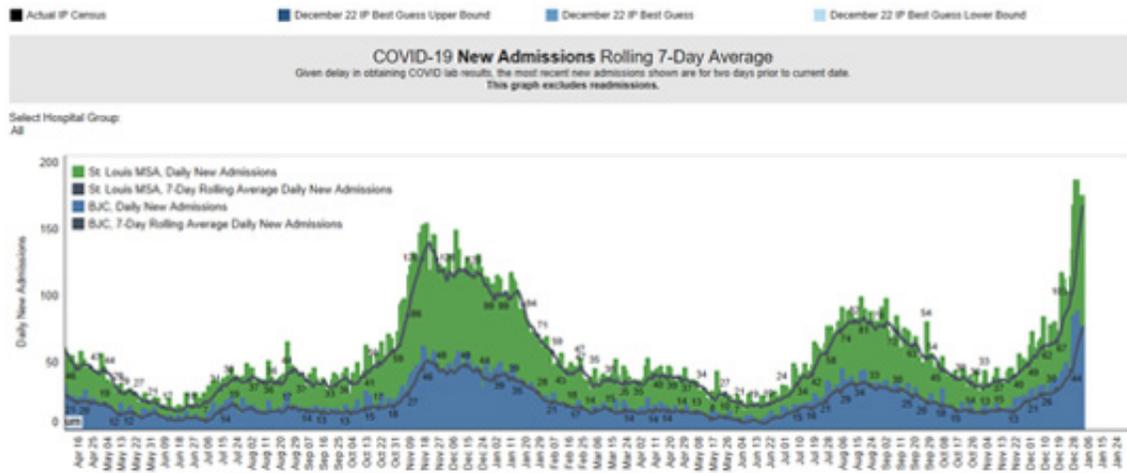
WashU Med

Active cases

120 employees

16 students

Key announcements



A chart of new COVID-19 hospital admissions in the St. Louis metropolitan area starting in April 2020 and showing sharp increase since November 2021, which currently exceeds last winter's surge.

BJC postpones some elective procedures amid record patient surge

This week, BJC HealthCare announced the decision to reschedule elective procedures, to ensure bed capacity is available for COVID-19 patients and allow clinical and support staff to focus on areas of the hospital with more urgent needs. At Barnes-Jewish Hospital, this currently only impacts surgeries that require an inpatient bed and can be safely postponed. The decision comes as COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are at an all-time high at Barnes-Jewish, across BJC and throughout our region. Patients who are impacted will be contacted by a BJC/WashU team member. Pediatric surgeries are not expected to be delayed.

Occupational Health streamlines exposure and testing procedures

The current surge in COVID-19 cases has created an overwhelming need for the services Occupational Health provides our campus community. As calls to the COVID-19 Exposure/Illness Hotline continue to increase beyond capacity, the Occupational Health team has further streamlined processes in order to reduce uncertainty and meet demand.

1. Employees who feel they **have been exposed but remain asymptomatic** should not seek testing through WashU Med or BJC and should not contact the COVID-19 Exposure/Illness Hotline at this time. BJC testing sites are no

the COVID-19 Exposure/Illness Hotline at this time. BJC testing sites are no longer testing exposed asymptomatic employees or patients.

2. Clinical employees who are **symptomatic but not yet tested** should contact the COVID-19 Exposure/Illness Hotline at 314-362-5056 to schedule a test. WashU Med is deploying additional support to the call center to help with call volumes, effective immediately. An online system is being developed for clinical employees who develop symptoms to schedule testing, when they can't get through to the hotline. More information will be distributed as soon as it's available.
3. Non-clinical employees and those who work from home should get tested elsewhere for the time being.
4. Employees with a **positive test from any source other than Washington University or BJC** should email occupationalhealth@wustl.edu to report their positive test result.
5. All communications to Occupational Health **after a positive or negative COVID-19 test** should be by email rather than a phone call. Our Occupational Health nurses will email the employee and their supervisor with the following information:
 - a. If the employee tests positive, there will be a brief recap questionnaire for the employee (and with the supervisor's help if needed) to complete that will allow Occupational Health to determine return-to-work parameters.
 - b. If the employee tests negative, they will receive return-to-work instructions via email.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we continue to navigate the pandemic.

CDC expands booster shot eligibility to 12- to 15-year-olds

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [updated its recommendations](#) for the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine booster on Wednesday to include children 12- to 15-years old, at least five months after they finish the primary vaccine series. The CDC had authorized the booster for ages 16 and 17 in December. At this time, only the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is authorized and recommended for adolescents aged 12-17.

WashU Med strongly encourages vaccine boosters

WashU Med strongly encourages all faculty, staff and students to [receive a booster](#) as soon as possible, and to have your eligible families receive a booster as well. The CDC [recommends boosters](#) for adults age 18 and older on the following schedule:

- Five months after the second dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine
- Six months after the second dose of the Moderna vaccine
- Two months after the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine

The CDC has expanded eligibility for the Pfizer/BioNTech booster to include children as young as 12, five months after the second dose.

WashU Med faculty, staff, fellows and postdocs can schedule an appointment to receive the Pfizer COVID-19 booster at the Occupational Health office by emailing occupationalhealth@wustl.edu or calling 314-362-3528. To receive the booster at a BJC public clinic, please [schedule an appointment online](#). You may also [visit the CDC website](#) for more vaccination locations.

Individuals are not required to receive their COVID-19 booster vaccination at the same location that they received their first series of the vaccine, and adults can also receive a booster dose from a different manufacturer than the vaccine they previously received.

If you receive a vaccine booster outside of the Medical Campus, please [submit documentation in ReadySet](#).

State of Missouri adds testing locations, hours

As the omicron variant drives increased COVID-19 transmission in our communities, the State of Missouri continues to provide drive-through community testing sites throughout the state and has added locations and available hours to the St. Louis area. Some sites require pre-registration and scheduling; others allow walk-ins.

Missourians can get a free COVID-19 test by:

- Utilizing one of the state's [free community testing sites](#).
 - Patients do not need to be Missouri residents to be tested through this process.
 - [Illinois testing sites](#) are also available; choose the Edwardsville box for Metro East locations.
- The state's free [at-home COVID-19 testing program](#) will begin accepting orders again on January 12, following a pause due to high demand and shipping constraints. Incoming lab samples will continue to be processed during the pause.

Prohibited: social events and food/drink in business meetings

To reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, there should be no in-person social events or parties on the Medical Campus, and no university-sponsored off-campus events, until further notice. In-person business meetings may continue, but food and drink should not be served. Packaged meals may be provided to meeting participants as they are leaving.

Activate exposure notifications on your phone to help stop the spread

Faculty, staff and students are strongly encouraged to activate exposure notifications on their Apple or Android devices. The system, called MO/Notify, is being piloted at WashU using the same privacy-protecting technology in use in over 25 other states. Using Bluetooth technology already running on your phone, and without tracking your location, MO/Notify anonymously logs which devices you've been near. If you later test positive, you can send an anonymous alert to let others know they should isolate and get tested, even if you don't know them. Learn more and activate at monotify.com.

Supervisors, please also help disseminate this information to staff who may not regularly access email.

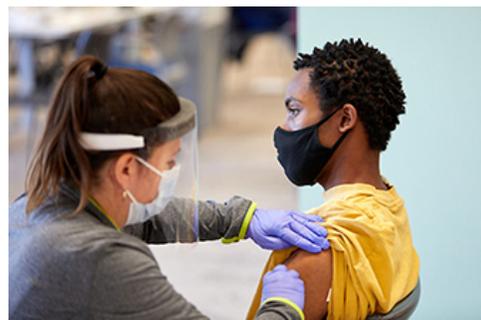
Other news

[**St. Louis County Council approves new mask requirement**](#) (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Jan. 5, 2022)

The St. Louis County Council voted this week to enact a countywide mask mandate in response to a surge in COVID-19 cases that have pushed infection and hospitalization rates to record levels across the region. The order took effect Wednesday and requires masks in public indoor spaces for vaccinated and unvaccinated people older than 5.

[**What makes an mRNA vaccine so effective against severe COVID-19?**](#) (WashU Med News, Dec. 23, 2021)

A study from researchers at WashU Med and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital helps explain why mRNA vaccines elicit such high levels of neutralizing antibodies, and suggests that vaccination may help many people continue producing potent antibodies even as the virus changes.



Resources

- [MO/Notify](#) exposure notifications
- [Online screening tool](#)
- Exposure & illness hotline: [314-362-5056](#)
- Work-life support/Employee Assistance Program (24/7): [844-365-4587](#)
- [BJC COVID-19 policies & procedures](#)
- [Washington University Physicians COVID-19 policies & procedures](#)
- [Medical Campus policies & updates](#)

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