

Health System News

COVID-19 Health System Updates

April 28, 2021, Wednesday

Across the country and here at Mount Sinai, we are moving into a new phase of the COVID-19 vaccine drive. For us, this means a few things.

First, if you or members of your team have not yet been vaccinated, there has never been a better time than now. **All of our vaccine pods are now accepting employee walk-ins** whenever the pods are open. We want to take care of our Mount Sinai family, and getting vaccinated is by far the best way for you to protect yourselves, your loved ones, and your patients against COVID-19.

I know that some of you may still have questions or doubts about the vaccines, and I respect that, but I hope you will talk to co-workers, friends, or family who have received a vaccine. When you're ready to be vaccinated, we'll be here for you.

For the last several months, we have been reaching out to high-priority groups to offer them vaccination appointments. This will continue, but this week **we are also opening vaccine appointments to any eligible member of the public via our website**. Anyone who is 16 or over and lives, works, or studies in New York State can register for a vaccine appointment [here](#). This includes you, if you'd prefer to schedule an appointment rather than walk in, and your friends and family. We will no longer be using the waiting lists we set up a few weeks ago, although we will make sure that everyone who signed up on those lists gets an appointment as soon as possible.

We will be carefully matching appointments to vaccine supply, and will only allow appointments when we are sure we have enough vaccine on hand to cover them. So if someone tries the site and doesn't find an appointment

available, please ask them to try again later. We will update the schedule as soon as the vaccine supply allows.

We know that many people are not comfortable using a website to book appointments or do not have ready access to a computer. That is why this website is not our only source for appointments. We will continue to reach out to the community and our patients through alternate methods. Equitable access to vaccines is vitally important to us, and we are striving toward it every day.

In other vaccine news, as you probably know, the Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have lifted the “pause” on the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, and we are moving to restart the limited Mount Sinai programs that use it. If you are involved in any of those programs, or if any of your patients or loved ones received that vaccine, you may find this [fact sheet](#) helpful.

As of this morning, we had 172 COVID-19-positive inpatients across the system, 40 of whom were in critical care. This week is the first time since early December that we have been below 200 total COVID-19 inpatients. The New York State seven-day average test positivity rates as of yesterday were 2.1 percent for New York City, 2.2 percent for Long Island, and 2.3 percent for the mid-Hudson region. In another very good sign, the number of staff on home isolation for confirmed or suspected COVID-19 exposure this week reached the lowest point since September.

Screening Tool for Patients and Visitors

We have updated the Mount Sinai Health System Infectious Diseases Screening Tool for visitors and patients, based on the most recent guidance on travel and quarantine from the New York State Department of Health. This screening tool is to be used at entrances of both inpatient and outpatient clinical areas. It can be found [here](#) in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Korean.

Update on Masking

As you may have seen, the CDC yesterday [announced](#) that people who have been vaccinated need no longer wear masks outdoors in certain situations, including if you're walking, running, hiking, biking, or attending small outdoor gatherings.

This is good news if you're vaccinated and off duty, but the CDC did not change their rules on indoor masking, so please join me in keeping your masks on when you are at work. We are reviewing the CDC's new guidance and will update our Mount Sinai [policies](#) as needed. I will keep you posted.

A Video to Warm Your Heart

Angie Vaquero is a 35-year-old woman living with Down syndrome who spent 45 days at The Mount Sinai Hospital being treated for COVID-19. The hospital environment can be especially stressful for people with Down syndrome, but in [this video](#), Ms. Vaquero and her mother, Delfina Soto, tell how everyone at the hospital went out of their way to make sure she felt cared for and had what she needed to recover and thrive.

I promise you: it's the best thing you'll watch all week. And it reminds me again how proud I am to wear the Mount Sinai badge by the side of not only those involved in this case, but of each of you, all across the system. Thank you once again for all you do.