

COVID-19 Health System Updates

April 7, 2021, Wednesday

Spring is in the air. We can feel it as we leave for work, or come home after a long day, or night, of caring for our patients, and hopefully as we take restorative and safe breaks with friends and family. With the gradual change in the weather, it is also a time of cautious optimism.

As of yesterday, all New Yorkers age 16 years and over are eligible for COVID-19 vaccines. This will allow us to reach many more of our patients and community members—and on a population level to decrease the spread of COVID-19. There is no doubt that for a short time demand will be higher than our supply or capacity to administer the vaccine. So it will take us a few weeks to get to all those who will want to be vaccinated.

That said, the City and State of New York have numerous vaccination sites with extensive capacity, and we hope that all of our employees, patients, and community members will take advantage of those resources. If you haven't been vaccinated yet, please sign up on our [employee waiting list](#) if you work onsite for Mount Sinai, or you work remotely and live in New York. You can also try to make an appointment through the [New York State](#) or [New York City](#) sites or [VaccineFinder](#).

The inpatient COVID-19 census continued to decline for another week; and the trend seems to be continuing, although, of course, this is no time to let our guard down. As of this morning, we had 305 COVID-19-positive inpatients across the system, 57 of whom were in critical care. The New York State seven-day average test positivity rates were 4.2 percent for New York City, 4.3 percent for Long Island, and 4.6 percent for the Mid-Hudson region.

Travel Policy Updates

We have made updates to our travel policy based on New York State Department of Health guidance. I know there have been a lot of changes announced from New York State and the CDC, so I want to share an easy-to-follow update:

- **Domestic travel:** All asymptomatic health care workers may return to work after domestic travel without quarantine or testing.
- **International travel:** All asymptomatic **vaccinated** health care workers and those who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 infection **within the last 90 days but are not vaccinated** may return to work after international travel without quarantine or testing. **Unvaccinated** employees who are returning from international travel (and have not recently recovered from COVID-19) must comply with quarantine and testing in order to return to work onsite. Please click [here](#) for the rules on return to work.

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 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.

Meet Our Scientists

A COVID-19 vaccine that is low in cost and relatively easy to produce has entered phase 1 clinical trials in Brazil, Mexico, Thailand, and Vietnam. And it is largely based on research led by renowned Mount Sinai virologists Peter Palese, PhD, Horace W. Goldsmith Professor and Chair of Microbiology; Florian Krammer, PhD, Mount Sinai Professor in Vaccinology; and Adolfo García-Sastre, PhD, Irene and Dr. Arthur M. Fishberg Professor of Medicine. The new vaccine is delivered through the harmless Newcastle disease virus (NDV) and can be mass-produced in chicken eggs—just as influenza vaccines are now made in factories around the world.

The COVID-19 vaccine, known as NDV-HXP-S, was developed here at Mount Sinai, and has induced compelling protection in two animal model systems, Dr. Palese says. The vaccine contains a stabilized SARS-CoV-2 spike protein developed at the University of Texas in Austin. The team is also developing NDV-based vaccines that target the South African spike variant and the Brazilian spike variant.

The phase 1 clinical trials, which are expected to end in July 2021, must establish that NDV-HXP-S works in people. The work is very promising so far. “To contain the spread of the virus worldwide, a vaccine that is both effective and cost-effective is urgently needed, especially in low- and middle-income countries with limited resources,” Dr. Palese says. “Our work suggests that an NDV-based vaccine would be a safe and highly scalable way to meet the vast demands of the global vaccine market.” Read more about the research in [The New York Times](#).

Connect, Appreciate, and Pause

I have enjoyed seeing so many of you connect with each other, appreciate your hard work, and pause to take time for yourself during these past few months. I have learned over and over again: when we lean on each other, we can get through anything. Here is a [video collage](#) of our Tip of the CAP events over the past two months.

I want to give special recognition to the Mount Sinai Spotlight Committee, which gathered the right people together to make these events a success. The team included food services, patient experience, operations, human resources, leadership, environmental services, communications, and many other colleagues at the local sites. While carrying the weight of their regular duties and all that COVID-19 brings, they found the energy to provide you with this intentional space and time. If you see your colleagues who helped with these events, please tip your cap to them!

Some of our sites will continue with Tip of the CAP events, although they will no longer be weekly. Others may shift their focus to wellness activities or other ways to support you. We will still find ways to connect, appreciate, and pause. It's

important to keep this practice as we emerge stronger from what we hope is the end of this crisis.

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