

Health System News

July 14, 2021

COVID-19 Health System Updates, July 14

Sometimes a cold is just a cold. But if we've learned anything during the 2020s, it's that things are rarely that simple.

What seems like "just a cold" can also be COVID-19—even in someone who is vaccinated. We've seen a few cases of this. Being vaccinated means you are protected almost completely against severe disease, hospitalization, or death from COVID-19, but you can still get a minor infection that looks like a cold. And you can transmit it to others.

So I want to start this week's update with a reminder and a request.

The reminder is about our new attestation policy. As Drs. Davis and Charney announced a few weeks ago, if you are fully vaccinated, have the vaccine sticker on your ID badge, and are asymptomatic, you no longer have to fill out the [daily attestation](#) before you arrive at work. But you do have to fill it out if you do not have a vaccine sticker, **or if you are vaccinated but experiencing symptoms that could be COVID-19.**

My request is that if you do have new-onset symptoms—including fever, cough, sinus congestion, shortness of breath, headache, or loss of taste or smell—please stay home unless you have been cleared by Employee Health Services (EHS). Even if it's just a cold, you'll spare your colleagues from getting it, and if you do have COVID-19 and come into contact with someone who is unvaccinated, the results for them could be dire. I know it's in our culture to power through illness and do what we need to, but please think twice under these circumstances. If you can't work from home, and EHS approves your coming in, please wear a mask everywhere you go for as long as you're symptomatic.

As of this morning, we had 20 COVID-19-positive inpatients across the system, 4 of whom were in critical care. The New York State seven-day-average test

positivity rates stood yesterday at 1.0 percent for New York City and Long Island, and 0.8 percent for the mid-Hudson region.

These test positivity rates have been going up for a couple of weeks now, and they're a reminder that COVID-19 is not yet behind us. If you haven't been vaccinated, please consider [doing so](#) while there's still time to avoid the new variants—as well as the increased testing requirements that will begin later this summer for all Mount Sinai Health System employees who are not vaccinated. By getting vaccinated, you'll also protect yourself, your loved ones, and your patients.

Myocarditis and Vaccination: What You Need to Know

You may have seen reports of some rare cases of myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart, in young men who received COVID-19 vaccines. In this new *Mount Sinai Today* [article](#), Kristin Oliver, MD, MHS, a pediatrician who is an expert on vaccines, explains this situation and why it's still better for teenage boys and young men to get vaccinated. The key point is that these cases of myocarditis are very, very rare and certainly a much lower risk than the harm from COVID-19 infection for people who remain unvaccinated.

Data on Front-Line Workers' Well-Being

Starting in the first weeks of the pandemic, a team of Mount Sinai researchers surveyed our front-line staff about their well-being and pandemic-related concerns, gaining insights that helped us develop supportive programs in real time. More than 3,000 front-line staff completed a survey in spring 2020, and 1,600 responded to a follow-up seven months later. One of the most important findings was that those of us who were already feeling burnout showed the most symptoms of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder related to the COVID-19 pandemic, while those who fared best had an active social network and felt supported by their supervisors.

“We were able to identify what types of things may put you at greater or lesser risk of these mental health outcomes, and inform how we can try to mitigate

them,” says a leader of the team, Jonathan Ripp, MD, MPH, Dean for Well-Being and Resilience and Chief Wellness Officer at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. These results were published in journals including [The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry](#) and [Chronic Stress](#). And they were used to drive a number of initiatives, including the [Center for Stress, Resilience, and Personal Growth](#), which offers support to all of us through workshops, counseling, and a [resilience app](#). To share our solutions and strategies, the Office of Well-Being and Resilience also developed a [toolkit](#) that is available to institutions around the world.

During stressful times like the pandemic, simply feeling heard is also important, says Jordyn Feingold, MD, an investigator in the studies, who graduated from Icahn Mount Sinai in May and is now a psychiatry resident. “Whether or not we have it in our control to fix all of these things right away,” she says, “just validating the concerns and letting people know that they’re not experiencing this in isolation, I think was really powerful.” Read more [here](#).

Let Your Inner TikTok Star Shine

Last winter, we had a contest for the best video to encourage masking in the break rooms, and we got some really great entries. Now, we want your inner TikTok star to shine once again, and show us your best short video encouraging vaccination. It should fall into one of these three categories:

1. Did You Know: Benefits of Getting the COVID-19 Vaccine
2. A Day in the Life of a Vaccinated Person
3. Tell Me You’re Vaccinated Without Telling Me You’re Vaccinated



Each video should be between 15 and 30 seconds and should be filmed vertically. Details about deadlines and how to submit are attached; please print this flyer out and distribute to your department or team. Each winning video team will receive an iPad. Your videos will also do something else: They will save lives. I mean that literally. People who are not vaccinated risk getting a severe case of COVID-19 that could put them in the ICU or kill them.

People who have been vaccinated avoid this risk almost completely. If you can persuade even one person to get vaccinated, it will be worth it.

The chance to save lives is why we all got into health care, and this is another way to do it. Thank you in advance for your video contributions, and for everything else you do to keep our patients and our colleagues safe and healthy.

Vicki R. LoPachin, MD, MBA
Senior Vice President
Chief Medical Officer
Mount Sinai Health System