

## COVID-19 Health System Updates

March 24, 2021, Wednesday

Vaccine eligibility in New York State continues to expand, and I'm pleased to tell you that we are now able to accept requests from employees who work remotely—if they live in New York State, and are 50 and over, or have one of the [medical conditions](#) listed by the state—in addition to those who work onsite.

If you are in any of these categories and want to be vaccinated through Mount Sinai, please [put your name on the waiting list](#), and we will let you know as soon as we have a vaccine for you. You can also try to make an appointment through the [New York State](#) or [New York City](#) sites or [VaccineFinder](#). Either way, it is exciting to see more and more groups of people become eligible for vaccine. It means we're getting that much closer to the end.

As of this morning, we had 366 COVID-19-positive inpatients across the system, 64 of whom were in critical care. These numbers continue to be highly variable day to day, but we have now been below 400 cases for an entire week, and that is a really encouraging trend. With the decrease, we are cautiously moving to restart some ambulatory procedures at some of our sites, and as soon as the numbers decline enough, we can give everyone a break and then fully return to normal.

The New York State seven-day average test positivity rates as of yesterday were 4.1 percent for New York City, 4.4 percent for Long Island, and 4.7 percent for the Mid-Hudson region, not much different than last week.

### A Reminder About Masking

Even though many, perhaps most, of you have been vaccinated by now, our Mount Sinai Health System [COVID-19 Code of Conduct](#) remains in effect. This includes wearing a mask anytime you are in a public or shared space on Mount Sinai property, even if you are sitting at a desk or cubicle with nobody else near you.

While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention did say recently that fully vaccinated people could gather indoors and unmasked under some circumstances, the New York State Department of Health has not changed its rules for the health care workplace.

The only times you are permitted to take your mask off on campus are when you are eating or drinking—in which case, be sure to sit at least six feet away from other people—or if you're alone in a private office. These rules apply even if you and the others around you are fully vaccinated. Supervisors are officially responsible for enforcing these rules, but we are all responsible for holding ourselves and each other accountable for doing the right thing.

While the vaccines vastly reduce your risk of getting severely ill from COVID-19, we need a bit more evidence that they prevent asymptomatic transmission of the disease and that they work against the variants that are circulating in our community before we can let our guard down. As community spread of COVID-19 decreases and vaccination rates increase, we expect these rules will change, and I will keep you posted.

### **Data Bank for COVID-19 Researchers**

Throughout the pandemic, Mount Sinai scientists have been gathering and sharing data to improve our understanding of COVID-19. A prime example is the Mount Sinai COVID-19 Biobank, a partnership of the Mount Sinai Clinical Intelligence Center (MSCIC) and Human Immune Monitoring Center (HIMC). During the peak of the first surge in 2020, the biobank sent a volunteer team of more than 100 research staff, nurses, physicians, and scientists to collect blood samples from nearly 800 patients admitted to our hospitals, and collection has continued into 2021.

From these specimens, the core team behind the biobank has generated a diverse set of molecular data from almost 3,000 time points, and now, in collaboration with the Office of Research Services, MSCIC and HIMC are

releasing the COVID-19 biobank data to approved applicants in an effort to further expand COVID-19 research within Mount Sinai.

“We have tried to use the COVID-19 Biobank as a new model for resource sharing, making all of the molecular data available to all Mount Sinai Health System researchers as it is generated,” says Alexander Charney, MD, PhD, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, Genetics and Genomic Sciences, Neuroscience, and Neurosurgery.

If you are a Mount Sinai researcher and would like to obtain access to this data, please submit a research proposal [here](#). If you are interested in more information or would like to collaborate with the Mount Sinai Clinical Intelligence Center, please reach out to [mscicinfo@mssm.edu](mailto:mscicinfo@mssm.edu).

### **Weekly Tip of the CAP**

I am grateful we found time again last week to connect, appreciate, and pause at our Tip of the CAP events across the Health System. Here is a [video collage](#) of last week's events.

Finding the time to simply be together certainly helps me reflect on and appreciate how we've come so far as a team and how we will emerge from this crisis stronger. It remains the honor of my lifetime to wear the Mount Sinai badge with you.

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