

COVID-19 Health System Updates

July 22, 2020 Wednesday

Thank you to everyone who responded to my note two weeks ago about masking. It is heartening to see so many of you properly wearing your masks every day. As a reminder, you can and should obtain masks from your units or from your supervisors. We are working on additional access points for nonclinical staff to obtain masks; stay tuned for the details. I'm very grateful to those of you who wrote in to the COVIDQuestions@mountsinai.org email box with suggestions.

I also want everyone to remember that masks are only part of the puzzle when it comes to stopping the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing is important as well. And here, too, while most of you are doing a good job observing the rules, there have been some cases where groups of employees are meeting for lunch, to catch up, or for retirement and birthday parties. And in a few of those cases, one employee in the gathering later developed COVID-19 symptoms. When that happens, everyone in the group who did not socially distance is required to quarantine for 14 days.

So I have to reinforce the message that COVID-19 is still among us. If you gather with your colleagues or friends, especially for lunch or coffee where you take off your masks, you are putting yourself and others at risk. Please be careful, and observe all three elements of COVID-19 prevention: masking, social distancing, and hand hygiene. These are required for our jobs, but they are also the smart thing to do. We want you to be here, healthy, and able to take care of your patients and keep your families safe.

Although COVID-19 cases continue to be low, we are still regularly admitting patients with new COVID-19 infections, and we cannot afford to let our guard down.

Reminder About New Travel Policy

On Saturday, we issued a [new travel policy](#) that contains significant new quarantine rules, growing out of the New York State policy on “hot spots.” If you are thinking of traveling outside New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania, please review this policy carefully. Also, be sure to check the latest state [hot spot list](#), as it changes frequently. And please know that exceptions to the new quarantine rules will be extremely rare. If you are traveling to a hot spot, you should expect to quarantine when you get back.

COVID-19 Memorials Planned

We are hosting events and creating memorials to members of the Mount Sinai community whom we have lost to COVID-19. It is important that we celebrate their lives and honor their commitment to Mount Sinai and to our communities. The first event is a virtual memorial service, which will be held on Tuesday, July 28, at noon. This nondenominational service will feature music, readings, and a recitation of names. Please release staff to view the service as their clinical and operational duties permit. To join the memorial service, click [here](#) or dial 929-436-2866 and enter meeting ID: 929 3206 1347 #.

Survey on COVID-19 Response

The Mount Sinai Health System’s Institute for Health Equity Research has partnered with community organizations across the city to better understand the impacts of COVID-19 on our communities through our [Speak Up on COVID-19](#) research study. We need your help so that we can provide better care and respond to communities during and after the pandemic. Your survey responses will educate policymakers, organizations, and health care providers who allocate resources to those who need them most. To be eligible you must be 18 or older and reside in New York City. Visit <https://is.gd/nycovid> to participate in the survey. Then, please ask five people you know to do the same.

Tell Your Story for the Archives

We are hoping that staff and students in all departments across the Health System will take advantage of the opportunity to talk with us and record your COVID-19 story for inclusion in the COVID-19 Collection of the Arthur H. Aufses, Jr. MD Archives at Mount Sinai. This could mean talking about your work experience, or something personal that you wanted to share about how this pandemic has impacted you: How did your day at work change? How was your life upended? What was your daily routine like during COVID-19? We can send you some questions to respond to, or you can tell us the story you want to preserve. For more information or to sign up for an interview slot, click [here](#).

Meet Our COVID-19 Scientists

Mount Sinai is taking the lead in creating and testing a promising therapy—hyperimmune globulin—that would be used to treat early COVID-19 disease and prevent at-risk populations from developing the disease. In this therapy, blood plasma from people with high levels of antibodies to COVID-19 is pooled together and purified, then given intravenously or by injection. A new [Plasma Collection Center](#) at The Mount Sinai Hospital is now seeking blood plasma from people who recovered from COVID-19 during the spring surge of cases in New York. We are working with two companies, Immunotek Bio Centers and Emergent BioSolutions, to collect and process the plasma, which would be given in clinical trials to patients with early disease, to front-line medical workers, and to military personnel who need to work in close contact. “We’re not helpless against COVID-19,” says Jeffrey Bander, MD, a leader of the team recruiting donors. “People can fight back by donating antibodies.” Read more about hyperimmune globulin [here](#), and learn more about plasma donation [here](#). And The Wall Street Journal ran a nice article on this program [here](#) (paywalled).

Thank you for your continued great work, for the care you continue to deliver, for your dedication to modeling the right behavior on face masks, and for

taking care of yourselves and each other. I remain as proud as ever to wear the Mount Sinai badge with you.

Vicki R. LoPachin, MD, MBA

Senior Vice President

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Mount Sinai Health System