

COVID-19 Health System Updates

January 6, 2021, Wednesday

Since receiving our first doses of COVID-19 vaccine on December 15, we have been able to vaccinate so many of members of our Mount Sinai family. We have been following the New York State Department of Health eligibility guidelines closely. Recently those guidelines allowed for expansion of eligibility to include ambulatory care sites. So, as of Monday, January 4, ALL patient-facing employed and voluntary physicians, staff, students, and trainees throughout the Mount Sinai Health System, and those who work with potentially infectious materials, are eligible for vaccination. This means clinical and nonclinical faculty and staff in any patient-facing role, including receptionists and other people who greet or interact with patients, in both Mount Sinai-owned and voluntary/affiliated practices.

This is great news, and a very happy way to start the New Year. I know that so many of you have been eager to get the vaccine, and I'm sorry that until now, we haven't always been able to explain exactly when you might be able to, because we were waiting for the guidance from the Department of Health. We have been moving forward very quickly. Yesterday, we vaccinated more than 2,100 people, and we aim to reach even larger numbers later this week.

Everyone who is now eligible for vaccination should have received an email with instructions about how to schedule an appointment. The email was sent from the address donotreply@mountsinai.org, and the subject was "SCHEDULE YOUR COVID-19 VACCINATION APPOINTMENT." If you didn't receive that email, and haven't been notified of your eligibility or given scheduling instructions in other ways, and you believe you're eligible for vaccine, please speak with your manager or clinical chief. Appointments can be scheduled at our hospitals, and we will be setting up temporary vaccination pods at many of our larger ambulatory sites as well.

If you are in a role that does not have exposure to patients or infectious materials, we will notify you as soon as we receive final Department of Health approval that you are eligible. And of course we are all eagerly anticipating final guidance on when vaccination can be offered more widely to the public.

It is so important that each of us gets vaccinated, to protect ourselves, our families, and our patients, and to help bring this pandemic under control. If you've already received your first dose, thank you—and be sure to come back when scheduled for your second dose. You need that second dose to have the best possible protection against COVID-19.

If you are eligible and have not yet been vaccinated, please schedule your appointment as soon as you can. Many of our sites are accepting walk-ins as well.

I want to again thank everyone who has been working on the vaccination rollout. It is an unprecedented and complex effort. And it's especially impressive in light of the continuing increase in COVID-19 caseloads across the system, which is also taking up so much of our time and energy. As of this morning, we had 472 COVID-19-positive inpatients across the system, 67 of whom were in critical care. We can expect these numbers to continue to increase over the next couple of weeks as people who contracted COVID-19 at holiday gatherings become symptomatic and need our care.

We are continuing to make changes as needed to accommodate these patients, including by adjusting services at some of our sites, transferring patients around the system to balance the load while providing them the best care possible, and adding bed capacity wherever we can. I am so grateful for the cooperation everyone has shown as we do this.

COVID-19 Vaccine and Pregnancy

I know that many of you who are of child-bearing age have questions about whether to get COVID-19 vaccine. If you are in that group, I highly recommend [this short video](#) by Angela Bianco, MD, Associate Professor of

Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Science. The bottom line is that while everyone should discuss this with their health care provider, it is very important to stay healthy while you are pregnant or considering becoming pregnant, and the vaccination can help you do that.

Busting More Vaccine Myths

In a previous broadcast I told you about NewsGuard, a company we're working with that tracks down and debunks [myths and falsehoods](#) circulating on the internet about COVID-19 vaccines. We've now prepared [our own list](#) of the top vaccine myths and the truth about them. Please feel free to print it out, pass it around, and give it to whoever needs to see it. And don't forget that you can find answers to questions you may have about the vaccines on our [public](#) and [employee](#) web sites.

The next few weeks will be hard. I'm not going to try to hide that. There's no break yet from COVID-19. But there is more and more hope. If each of us does our part, by wearing our masks, keeping our distance, washing our hands, and getting the vaccine when it's our turn, we will overcome this before too long. I'm confident of it. Because I'm confident in you: the remarkable people who wear the Mount Sinai badge. You've met every challenge this pandemic has thrown at you. Together, we'll meet this one as well.

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