

## COVID-19 Health System Updates

March 17, 2021, Wednesday

I have good news for those of you who are working remotely and want to get vaccinated. Starting today, if you live in New York State and are eligible for vaccination based on your age or health condition, you can put your name on a waiting list for vaccination at one of our Mount Sinai sites. Click [here](#) to register, and we will get back to you as soon as we have vaccine.

I can't predict how long you will have to wait; we're not sure yet what either the demand or supply will be for this service. If you can get an appointment elsewhere, including the [New York City](#) or [New York State](#) websites, please go ahead and do so. But if you want or need to get an appointment at Mount Sinai, we can now help you.

Again, this is for New York State residents only, and you have to be 60 or over or have one of the health conditions [listed by the state](#). I'm very sorry that we can't open this to all remote employees, but we have to abide by the state's guidelines. If you live in another state, you should try to register there; here are links to vaccine information for [New Jersey](#), [Connecticut](#), [Pennsylvania](#), and [Florida](#).

In other vaccine news, I'm pleased to say that we have been getting a more steady and consistent supply of vaccine for several weeks and, as a result, have been able to vaccinate increasing numbers of our most vulnerable patients and community members. We have been working with religious, civic, and other organizations across the communities we serve, to identify those most in need of vaccines and invite them to come in.

The New York State Department of Health has now adopted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for what happens if you are exposed to someone with COVID-19 at work after you are fully vaccinated. People who are at least two weeks past their second vaccine dose (or their only dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine) and who are exposed to someone with COVID-19 at work do

not have to quarantine unless they are experiencing symptoms of the disease. If you do have symptoms, of course, you should get tested and stay home. And all exposures should still be reported to Employee Health Services (EHS).

As of this morning, we had 393 COVID-19-positive inpatients across the system, 73 of whom were in critical care. The New York State seven-day average test positivity rates as of yesterday were 4.2 percent for New York City, 4.5 percent for Long Island, and 4.7 percent for the Mid-Hudson region.

### **Travel Policy Updates**

As you may have heard, Governor Cuomo recently changed the New York State policy for people who travel outside New York and our five neighboring states. We are still studying the state's new domestic travel policy and will announce any changes to our own rules soon for people who travel to states or U.S. territories other than New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, or Vermont.

For international travel, whether you are fully vaccinated or not, new rules apply for all trips that start on or after today. You must now comply with one of these two options to return to work after traveling outside the United States:

1. Quarantine and self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms for 10 days. If you have supervisor approval to work remotely, you may do so during this time; otherwise, you will be required to use PTO or other available leave time for quarantine. You may return to work on Day 11 after you return from your trip, but must continue daily symptom monitoring through Day 14.
2. Quarantine for seven days and take a SARS-CoV-2 PCR test between Day 3 and Day 5 after your return. You may not report for onsite work until seven days after your return, even with a negative test, and you must use PTO or other leave time during this period unless you are approved to work remotely or the trip is work-related. All results (negative and positive) must be sent to [COVID\\_travel@mountsinai.org](mailto:COVID_travel@mountsinai.org). For negative results, you will receive an email that must be shared with supervisors upon return to work.

For positive results, EHS will contact you to discuss additional quarantine requirements.

You can review the complete travel policy [here](#). As a reminder, all travel outside the six-state area must be registered with our [travel registry](#), and you can schedule PCR testing through one of our [employee testing sites](#).

### **Event: Building Vaccine Confidence in the Black Community**

Next Monday, March 22, Lynne Richardson, MD, Professor and Vice Chair of Emergency Medicine and Co-Director of the Institute of Health Equity Research at Mount Sinai, will be a featured speaker at an event called “Building Vaccine Confidence in the Black Community” that is being produced by Accenture, the consulting company, in partnership with Mount Sinai’s Black Leaders Advocating for Change and Community Employee Resource Group and their counterparts at Pfizer.

The panel discussion, which begins at 5:30 pm, will focus on the importance of addressing vaccination needs in underserved populations, particularly in the Black community. To register, click [here](#) and choose "Client" as your registration type.

### **Meet Our Scientists**

A team of Mount Sinai researchers studied the effect of stress on 361 of our health care workers, and found evidence of something very encouraging—that having high resilience or emotional support can protect us from the effects of stress. In the [preprint study](#), staff members answered surveys about their health and well-being and used the Apple Watch, with a customized app, to measure heart rate variability (HRV)—a primary component of the body’s autonomic nervous system (ANS) and a keen indicator of the effect of stress on the body.

“Individuals may tell us about their feelings or symptoms, which is subjective, but HRV is how your body speaks and reveals itself,” says the study’s senior author, Zahi A. Fayad, PhD, Director of the BioMedical Engineering and Imaging Institute, and Professor of Radiology, and Medicine (Cardiology).

In the study, which is part of the innovative Warrior Watch project, researchers found that the participants' physiological results aligned with their self-reported surveys: Individuals with high resilience or emotional support were protected against the effects of stress and had different ANS stress patterns, compared with those who had medium or low emotional support or resilience. The team's next steps will be to "study the effects of resilience-building interventions on HRV, the ANS, and on improving the well-being of health care workers," says the study's corresponding author, Robert P. Hirten, MD, Assistant Professor of Medicine (Gastroenterology). Read more [here](#).

### **Looking Back on the Moment of Reflection**

Last week, our Mount Sinai community marked with a day of reflection the one-year anniversary of when the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. Some gathered together for moments of reflection, and others contributed notes about losses, gratitude, and resilience to central displays in the lobbies and other gathering areas. You can see photos of these events [here](#).

Whatever way you observed the anniversary, I hope it was meaningful. It was an opportunity to grieve for what we have lost, but also to rededicate ourselves to the task at hand. This pandemic, like all pandemics, will come to an end, and we are much, much closer to the end than to the beginning. Together, and in the finest tradition of Mount Sinai, we will overcome it and reach a healthier place for ourselves and our communities.

**Vicki R. LoPachin, MD, MBA**

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