

# COVID-19: Health System Updates

September 16 2020, Wednesday

Friday night is Rosh haShanah, the Jewish New Year and the start of High Holidays celebrations that will continue into October with Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Simchat Torah. I want to start by wishing all who celebrate a Shanah Tovah—a good year—and a happy and healthy 5781. May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for another year.

Because we are still in the time of COVID-19, however, we must consider the health consequences of some of the holiday rituals. It is commanded that Jews hear the shofar, or ram's horn, on Rosh haShanah. However, as with singing or loud conversation, shofar-blowing presents obvious risks of airborne virus transmission. So we must regretfully ask this year that neither our staff nor visitors blow a shofar inside any of our hospitals. We will permit shofar-blowing outside, with social distancing, and invite patients and staff to watch and listen from their windows.

The holiday of Sukkot carries additional risks, as families and friends gather in the sukkah, or open-air booth, to share food and conversation. As with any gathering, there is potential for virus transmission if people sit too closely, especially while unmasked and eating. So with sadness, we are recommending that sukkot not be constructed on Mount Sinai property this year, and that if you celebrate at a sukkah of your own or at your synagogue, please be mindful of social distancing and avoid crowds.

Whether you celebrate the High Holidays or not, this is a good opportunity to remember the essential points of COVID-19 prevention: masking, social distancing, and hand hygiene. If you commute to work on public transportation, please note that Governor Cuomo has ordered the MTA to enforce masking on its buses and trains, with a \$50 fine for those who refuse. And, of course, here at Mount Sinai, our rule continues to be that all staff should wear a Mount Sinai-issued mask while in any of our facilities. That way, we keep each other, and our patients and visitors, safe.

## **Get Your Flu Shot Now**

As my colleagues and I said in an email earlier this week, it's even more important than usual that everyone get their flu shot this year. To maintain social distancing, flu shots will be given by appointment this year. You can see a list of flu shot events [here](#) and make an appointment [here](#). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is recommending that everyone over six months of age get their flu shot by the end of October this year.

## **Meet Our COVID-19 Scientists**

Men who became sick enough to be hospitalized at Mount Sinai for COVID-19 were both younger and otherwise healthier on average than their female counterparts, a team led by Kuan-lin Huang, PhD, and Tomi Jun, MD, has found. Their preprint study, posted recently on [medRxiv](#), analyzed the electronic health records of 3,086 of our COVID-19 patients. “Looking at the data, there were a disproportionate number of men being hospitalized,” Dr. Jun says. “Just being male seemed to be a risk factor in and of itself.” Dr. Huang says a complex set of factors, including hormonal and immunological differences between men and women, could have contributed to the results. The hope is that further study, informed by our researchers’ access to electronic health records, will lead to more precise patient management, Dr. Huang says. Read more about the research [here](#).

### **Vaccine Specialists Share Insights at Aspen Ideas Festival**

“Where do we really stand with COVID-19 vaccines today, and when do you think we will have something safe and effective?” These were just a few of the questions addressed by two of our world leaders in the research and treatment of COVID-19—Judith Aberg, MD, and Florian Krammer, PhD—in a recent webinar for the Aspen Ideas Festival. The session was moderated by Kenneth L. Davis, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Mount Sinai Health System, and it is a fascinating 45 minutes. You can watch it [here](#).

With the start of autumn less than a week away, we are fortunate that our COVID-19 caseload across the system continues to be low. If that changes as the weather turns colder, I am confident that you will meet and overcome the challenge as you have so many times before. It remains the honor of my life to work by your side.

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