

COVID-19 Health System Updates

October 28, Wednesday

We're coming up to what should be a happy time: the start of the fall holiday season. From now through New Year's Day, the holidays give us opportunities to recharge, relax, and reconnect with our loved ones.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic is still with us, we should still do our best to enjoy the holidays—in a safe way. Here are some tips:

For Halloween this Saturday, here is our advice. If you take kids trick-or-treating, observe a few simple precautions: Don't have them go inside other people's houses or linger too long in crowds outside a house; make sure they wear face masks underneath their costumes; and make sure everyone washes or sanitizes their hands frequently.

Thanksgiving is a bit more complicated, because many of us will want to see our extended families, which may include older relatives and others who are especially vulnerable to COVID-19.

Each of you will have to decide whether it's worth the risk to your relatives and yourselves to gather the family together, but I can tell you how to mitigate the risk if you do: Outdoors is better than indoors; if you eat indoors, open some windows if you can, and consider spreading out over several tables in different rooms and not facing another person directly while eating; keep your mask on when you're not eating; wash your hands frequently; and don't meet up with your family if you're feeling ill. The things that keep you safer at work are the same things that will keep you safer over the holidays.

Also, if you're considering traveling outside New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania to see family over the holidays, please review our [travel policy](#)—which includes the process for registering out-of-region travel—and the latest [list of hot-spot states](#) from which travelers are required to

quarantine. These policies apply to work and personal travel, including travel for the holidays.

As of this morning, we had 102 COVID-19-positive inpatients in our hospitals, 20 of whom were in intensive care. I'm encouraged that both numbers are down somewhat from last week.

Visitation Restrictions at Mount Sinai Brooklyn

Effective today, the New York State Department of Health (DOH) has temporarily suspended most visitation at Mount Sinai Brooklyn. The suspension is because Mount Sinai Brooklyn is located within a "Red Micro-Cluster Zone" as defined by DOH in a new [Health Advisory](#). All hospitals in "red" zones are subject to limitations on visitation. The DOH advisory is in response to an increase in COVID-19 cases in defined geographic areas, and its intent is to prevent broader viral transmission. No other Mount Sinai Health System hospitals are affected by this advisory.

Reminder About Testing

As a reminder, eligible employees can get both swab (PCR) and serum antibody testing for COVID-19 through Employee Health Services (EHS). Please see [this website](#) for details about eligibility. Those who are not eligible for testing through EHS can be tested at any [Mount Sinai ambulatory testing site](#).

Behind the Scenes

In this new feature, I plan to periodically spotlight some of our leaders who have been working behind the scenes to keep us all safe. One of them is Bernard Camins, MD, the Mount Sinai Health System's Medical Director for Infection Prevention.

At the height of the pandemic, in a typical day, Dr. Camins says, "I was trying on gowns; I was looking at specifications on surgical masks; I was testing face

shields; I was going to warehouses to look at PPE, and at the same time, writing policies and meeting with people by video conference.”

A high point was a day in late spring when “we were all still tired and worried” but the curve of COVID-19 cases was finally and definitively turning down. What makes him proudest is the selflessness of staff members all over Mount Sinai, including his colleagues in Infection Prevention. He would also like to acknowledge Supply Chain. “They’re in the background all the time, but they kept us afloat,” for example by staying up all night to make phone calls to PPE suppliers all over the world.

Looking ahead, Dr. Camins warns that even after the first vaccine is in use, enhanced safety protocols will be a fact of life for many months to come. “Practicing social distancing, wearing masks and eye protection for patient care—we will be doing these things for a while,” he says. “But this will gradually go away. We just have to be patient.”

I think that is excellent advice.

Have a good Halloween, and I’ll update you again soon.

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