

# COVID-19 Health System Updates

February 9, 2022, Wednesday

We're updating a number of policies this week to reflect the ebb of the Omicron wave, but before I get to those, I want to thank the thousands of you who have [reported your booster to Employee Health Services \(EHS\)](#) in recent weeks. You've not only satisfied the state's requirement; you've taken the most important step possible to keep yourself and others safe.

It is truly remarkable how effective these boosters are. The Pfizer and Moderna boosters reduce hospitalizations from the Omicron variant by 90 percent, and the Johnson & Johnson booster reduces Omicron hospitalizations [by 85 percent](#). And people who have been boosted are [97 times less likely to die](#) than the unvaccinated and 14 times less likely to die than those who are fully vaccinated but not boosted.

I know some of you have wondered how necessary the booster is if you actually had COVID-19 recently. We know from previous waves that having had COVID-19 did not protect people adequately against new variants. As an example, the antibodies developed from the Delta variant did not protect against Omicron. Because the Omicron variant is so new, there are not a lot of data yet, but we know from previous variants that boosters do increase your protection even after you've had COVID-19. So it's likely that they will do so here.

Regardless, the mandate by the state does apply to all health care workers, even those who have already had COVID-19. **If you do not get your booster by the deadline that applies to you, we will be required to terminate you from your job.** A reminder of the details is [here](#) and attached.

The mandate begins to take effect in less than two weeks. If you haven't gotten your booster yet, we are adding hours at many of our vaccination sites; please check with your local leadership for details. You can also get your shot anywhere that's convenient, including your local pharmacy, the [American Museum of Natural History](#), or

any site listed on the [New York State](#), [New York City](#), [New Jersey](#), or [Connecticut](#) websites. And remember, **you must report your booster to EHS even if you got it at Mount Sinai.**

As of this morning, we had 192 inpatients with COVID-19 across the system, 32 of whom were in critical care. The New York State seven-day average test positivity rates as of yesterday were 2.8 percent for New York City, 4.9 percent for Long Island, and 4.2 percent for the mid-Hudson region.

### **In-Person Meetings Can Resume**

With the continuing decline in COVID-19 cases, we are adjusting our meetings policy. As of this coming Monday, February 14, the Mount Sinai Health System, including the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, is allowing Mount Sinai employees to hold in-person meetings and events as long as participants adhere to the rules below. Virtual options should be made available when possible.

- Everyone in attendance must wear a mask for the entire duration of the meeting/event.
- Food and drinks are not permitted.
- Meetings held onsite should be limited to only Mount Sinai participants.
- Non-Mount Sinai attendees may attend virtually. Non-Mount Sinai speakers are permitted onsite if they are up to date on their COVID-19 vaccinations.
- Any meetings/events held offsite that are hosted by Mount Sinai need to follow the same rules as above.

Please note that auditoriums and other large spaces on campus are currently not available for meetings, because they are still reserved as eating spaces for staff.

### **Updated Rules for PPE Use**

Starting today, N95 respirators are no longer required—but still recommended—for all direct patient care. However, N95s and all other standard PPE are still required while performing aerosol-generating procedures and when caring for patients confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19.

You may have seen news reports that Governor Hochul plans to end the statewide mask mandate this week. However, masking will still be required in all health care facilities, so please keep your mask on at all times while you're on Mount Sinai property, unless you're alone in a private room, or eating or drinking at least six feet away from other people.

### **Another Way to Get Free Test Kits**

If you want to get more test kits for home use, and you're enrolled in the Mount Sinai nonunion benefits plan, you can now go to any pharmacy that's in-network and obtain up to eight test kits every 30 days. Just go to the pharmacy counter and show your Medimpact prescription insurance card. If you're in a union health plan, please check with your plan's administrator for instructions.

### **Taking a Breath**

We're not fully out of the woods yet, and I want to acknowledge that many of you are still working extremely hard to take care of our patients. But as the numbers continue to move in the right direction, I'm sure you'll all be able to catch your breath soon. When you do, I want you to take a moment to appreciate what you've achieved. Together, we've brought our communities through four waves of this disease. No one could have done it better. It remains the honor of my life to work side by side with all of you

**Vicki R. LoPachin, MD, MBA**  
Senior Vice President  
Chief Medical Officer  
Mount Sinai Health System