

COVID-19 Health System Updates

January 5, 2022, Wednesday

As the Omicron wave continues to batter our region, I want to start by saying **thank you** to everyone who has been working so hard before, during, and after the holidays. I've said this before—and I know words can only help so much—but I really mean it when I say you are New York's health care heroes, and we are in your debt.

Many of you are exhausted and frustrated by a pandemic that never seems to end, yet you keep pushing through to take care of our patients and our communities. Please know that we hear you, see you, and profoundly respect and value you.

And we are doing what we can to help support you. For example, we have welcomed with gratitude more than 130 medical and graduate students and postdocs to help in various areas. We are also welcoming pools of colleagues from around the system for potential redeployment in nursing, ambulatory care, pharmacy, radiology, and the labs. If you are part of these groups, your supervisor will let you know. I hope you know how grateful we are to you for helping out.

Many of you are also wondering where to get the latest information and links related to this crisis. Today, I want to unveil **a new resource we've created that pulls all the information you need into one place**, with links that will always take you to the latest updates. It's [on the web](#), and a printable version is attached to this email. You can get to it through this QR code as well.



It's where you'll find links to everything you need to know about testing, masks and PPE, visitor policies, support and well-being resources, and what to do if you get sick and when you're ready to return to work. I hope you find it useful.

Speaking of getting sick and returning to work, we've taken down the daily symptom attestation form. If you need to report COVID-19 symptoms or a high-risk exposure, be sure to use the [EHS REDCap](#) form.

The Numbers

As of this morning we had 804 inpatients with COVID-19 across the system, 67 of whom were in intensive care. We expect these numbers to continue to grow for the next two weeks but to crest well short of the 2,000-plus patients we saw at the peak of the initial surge in April 2020.

We are still seeing, on average, milder illness in the current wave of patients than we saw in any previous wave. The proportion of patients in critical care has been steady for the last week in the range of 7 percent to 9 percent, roughly half of what it was at this time last year.

You may have heard that the New York State Department of Health (DOH) recently reported a four-fold increase in pediatric hospitalizations associated with COVID-19 in New York City. We saw an increase in our pediatric COVID-19 patient population around the same time, but from a very low base. At the start of December, Mount Sinai Kravis Children's Hospital had two inpatients with COVID-19; as of Monday, they had 14, five of whom were in the pediatric intensive care unit. Some of these child patients were admitted for COVID-19, while the rest were admitted for other reasons and found to have COVID-19 after their arrival.

The New York State seven-day average test positivity rates as of yesterday were 22.5 percent for New York City, 25.5 percent for Long Island, and 21.9 percent for the mid-Hudson region. These are extraordinary numbers, but reporting of test results can be erratic during the holidays. We should have more reliable data by this time next week. And, thanks to the region's high vaccination rates, the vast majority of people with COVID-19 infection have mild illness.

News on Boosters

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) this week shortened the wait time for Pfizer boosters from six months to five months after the second dose, and authorized a third dose for immunocompromised children between 5 and 11 years old. The FDA also authorized booster shots of the Pfizer vaccine in children ages 12 through 15; the CDC will consider that issue today, and our state DOH is expected to act on all these items shortly. We will move quickly after that to start scheduling booster shots for children in this age group. This means that if you want a

booster shot for yourself, you should [schedule it](#) quickly before we make appointments available to these new groups. We will let you know soon how to schedule a booster shot for your newly eligible child.

This pandemic may seem never-ending at the moment, but the rapid spread of Omicron may even be a blessing in disguise, if it helps drive out more virulent variants while boosting immunity among the population. We don't know for sure that that will happen, but we can hope. We do know for sure that all pandemics end, and this one will too. And every bit of effort you put in brings us that much closer to the end.

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