

COVID-19 Health System Updates

March 17 2020, Tuesday

Good morning. As we enter the third week of our region's COVID-19 health care crisis, I want to tell you how many stories I am hearing about your efforts that leave me in awe. You are displaying true heroism at a moment when our neighbors need us most. I will be sharing some of those stories with you in the coming days.

In the meantime, I want to assure you that your well-being matters more than ever. As the regional situation continues to change, we must adapt and evolve. That's why you will see changes to our masking, visitation, and volunteer policies across the system. We are making these changes with your and your patients' health in mind as we all continue to adjust to new realities and work to keep everyone safe.

As a reminder, more detailed information on these changes and all employee resources are now available on a public website that doesn't require a password:

<http://www.mountsinai.org/covid19staffresources>.

Additionally, we want to be as transparent as possible with all of you and give you the information you need to do your jobs but also to have peace of mind. Not surprisingly, we have received many questions about the volume of patients with COVID-19 in our health system and we want to address those questions. As of yesterday, across all of our hospitals we had 25 inpatients who were tested and found to be positive. We had another 103 patients who were under investigation and monitoring for possible COVID-19 infection.

New Masking Policy

Due to the increase in community spread, starting today, we recommend that [all staff who provide direct patient care wear a mask](#). Any masks that become wet or soiled should be replaced, but we also ask that everyone does their best not to be wasteful and to preserve resources as much as possible.

New Visitation Policy

We are prohibiting all visitors across the Mount Sinai Health System. This includes visitors to the emergency departments, inpatient units, ambulatory sites, and other facilities.

While these are difficult changes, they are necessary steps aimed at achieving our top priority: the safety and health of our staff and patients. There will, however, be a few important exceptions, which apply only to healthy visitors. Those include:

- *Pediatrics/NICU*: **One** healthy visitor allowed.
- *Maternity and Postpartum*: **One** healthy partner allowed.
- *End of Life/Palliative Care*: **One** healthy visitor allowed.
- *Ambulatory Geriatrics*: **One** healthy visitor allowed.
- *Discharge*: **One** healthy visitor allowed to pick up discharged patients.
- *For the Emergency Departments*: For patients requiring assistance, **one** healthy visitor is allowed. Only **one** visitor per pediatric patient is allowed in the pediatric ED (parent or caregiver only).

If visitors show any COVID-19 symptoms, staff should politely ask them to leave and provide them with follow-up information. We also know there may be unique situations depending on patient need. If you believe an exception to the above policy should be made, please speak to your supervisor. Above all, let's use our common sense and good judgment to do the right thing.

Volunteer Policy

Effective Thursday, March 19, volunteer assignments in patient care areas will be temporarily suspended. Processing of new volunteers will also be temporarily suspended. Please visit the policy page on the [employee website](#) for additional details.

Employee Health Monitoring Guidelines

Finally, we have created a new Mount Sinai [Employee Testing, Monitoring, and Clearance Process](#). This new guide directs you on what symptoms to look for in yourself, what to do if you do become sick, how to get tested, and when you could return to work if you do get sick. This document and all health system COVID-19 Employee Resources can now be found on our new [website](#).

If there are any questions on the steps we are taking, please do not hesitate to reach out and contact us at CovidQuestions@mountsinai.org

I want to say again that I have never been prouder to be your colleague and to wear the Mount Sinai badge.