As a physician and a parent, I know the anxiety and anticipation that many of you are feeling with regard to COVID-19 vaccines for children, even as we see more and more signs that expanded use of vaccine can bring this pandemic to an end.

In that regard, yesterday we had some good news. The vaccine advisory committee of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommended that the FDA grant emergency use authorization to a lower dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in children ages 5-11. The clinical trial in this age group—which used two doses of 10 micrograms each, a third of the adult dose—had an efficacy rate of nearly 91 percent, indicating it is very effective at preventing symptomatic infection in young children. This shows that COVID-19 is about to become a vaccine-preventable disease in children: we will be able to prevent infections, hospitalizations, and deaths in our most vulnerable young ones.

Once fully authorized, pediatricians and other providers will be prepared to offer the vaccine in designated Mount Sinai vaccination pods. If all proceeds as expected, we hope to start vaccinating late next week. Once we know more on timing and approvals, we will follow up over email with a link and process to schedule appointments.

As one superhero-loving child said recently, “I cannot wait to get my COVID shield.” I know this choice is personal for each family, but we will be here for you and your children and will update you as we know more.

**Moderna Booster Shots Still Available; Deadline for Second Doses**

Meanwhile, as you saw over the weekend, the regulatory agencies have given the green light for us to offer booster shots of Moderna’s vaccine, as well as Pfizer’s, to qualifying adults. We are offering appointments for both vaccines to our Mount Sinai family, and expect to open appointments for Moderna boosters to the public soon. For now, you can check eligibility and make an appointment [here](#); when you get to the
appointments (ZocDoc) page, scroll all the way down to see available Moderna appointments.

For those of you who began your vaccination series recently, today is the deadline to receive your second dose in order to be in compliance with the New York State employee vaccine mandate. As a general rule, this applies to everyone except for employees who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, have a religious or medical exemption, or have an exemption request pending. Failure to receive the second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines will have similar consequences to failure to get the first dose. That means suspension without pay and ultimately termination. So if you need that second dose, please get to a pod as soon as you can. We want you to be fully protected against COVID-19 and to stay part of the Mount Sinai family.

As of this morning, we had 57 COVID-19-positive inpatients across the system, 21 of whom were in critical care. The New York State seven-day average test positivity rates as of yesterday were 1.0 percent for New York City, 2.2 percent for Long Island, and 1.9 percent for the mid-Hudson region.

Policy Updates

We recently updated our meetings policy, which you can see on our website. We are now permitting outside guests to attend Mount Sinai-sponsored or cosponsored events on our campuses, as long as the event is primarily for Mount Sinai employees. All guests must be vaccinated. Masks must remain on, no food is allowed, and meetings must not run longer than three hours. The volunteer policy was also recently updated.

These policy changes, and the numbers in the preceding paragraph, show that we’re continuing to move back toward normal operations. But there’s a long way to go, and we’re going to follow guidelines and take it slowly, especially after what we’ve learned about the Delta variant over the past few months. Safety remains our most important value, and that applies just as much to our Mount Sinai family as to patient care.

So please, keep wearing your mask when you’re on campus; please remember there can be no food or drinks in meetings and that masks must remain on at all times (unless you are alone in an office); get your flu shot and your COVID-19 booster if you haven’t yet, and urge your loved ones, patients, and colleagues to do the same. We’ve gotten this far together. Let’s keep it up.
Vicki R. LoPachin, MD, MBA
Senior Vice President
Chief Medical Officer
Mount Sinai Health System