

# COVID-19: Health System Updates

October 7 2020, Wednesday

As you are likely aware, we are seeing some increases in COVID-19 case numbers, both in the community and in some of our hospitals. To put this into proper context, today we have about 4 percent of the total number of COVID-19-positive inpatients that we had in our hospitals at the peak back in April.

We do not expect anything like the kind of volumes we saw back then. And we are so much better prepared to deal with whatever we do see. That is for sure. We have surge units fully built out and at the ready; we have massive stockpiles of PPE and other equipment; we have more sophisticated and effective clinical protocols and treatments; and we have deep insights into how to keep ourselves safe. We've got this.

Our leadership teams are watching closely to make sure we remain prepared and ready for whatever may come at us. At some of our sites, we will be shifting units around to cohort COVID-19 patients together. Your local leadership will tell you if that's the case. Beyond the cohorting, we see no need at this time to alter our operations. All services, including elective procedures, are still good to go.

But we need all of you to help in one critically important way: Now that we are seeing this uptick in our community, it is even more urgent that each of us do our part by following the Mount Sinai Health System [Code of Conduct](#) around COVID-19. This Code includes six points:

1. Check your temperature and for other COVID-19 symptoms, and complete the electronic self-attestation form on your phone or at a screening station, before the start of each shift.
2. Contact Employee Health Services (EHS) before reporting to work if you have a new onset of COVID-19 symptoms, or if anyone in your household or a close contact has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or develops symptoms of COVID-19.
3. Wear a Mount Sinai-issued mask at all times while in public areas such as hallways, shared office spaces, elevators, meeting rooms, and restrooms.
4. Maintain social distancing in elevators and common areas, and especially when eating and you cannot wear a mask.
5. Practice frequent hand hygiene.
6. Wear eye protection when you are providing direct patient care at the bedside or in a treatment room.

Managers and supervisors will be working hard to ensure that we follow these rules. But it is really up to each of us hold ourselves and each other accountable. Following these rules helped us get through the crisis in the spring, and we can't let our guard down now. And it's important not to let your guard down in your personal life as well—so please be careful and use good judgment about attending events or participating in non-distanced indoor activities. As

we've seen repeatedly, activities like that pose a risk not just to you, but to everyone around you.

With regard to break rooms, a couple of additional points. We often think of our colleagues as our "work family," but when it comes to possible disease transmission, they're not the same as the family you live with.

So we are tightening up the rules for break rooms. First, you may only take your mask off in a break room if you are eating or drinking something **at that moment and only if you are at least 6 feet away from others**. We're also asking managers to schedule people for specific times in break rooms, to keep the crowding down. If you do go to the break room, you must keep your distance **and** wear a mask. This is to protect you, your colleagues, and our patients. And we will be working hard to reorganize furniture, to find additional break room space, and to organize break schedules—all in the service of keeping you safe.

As of this morning, we have 83 COVID-19 cases in Mount Sinai Health System hospitals. Six months ago, we had about 2,000. All of us, working together as a team, coped successfully then with New York City's greatest health crisis in a century. We can absolutely handle this one.

### **COVID-19 Contact Tracing App Available**

The New York State Department of Health has launched a new app, COVID Alert NY, which allows for voluntary, anonymous COVID-19 contact tracing. If you sign up, you will get an alert if you were in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19. To learn more, visit the Department's [information page](#).

Please note that this app is different from the Stop COVID NYC app that Mount Sinai [launched in April](#) to track the pandemic's spread; the Mount Sinai app uses only anonymized data and cannot trace individuals' contacts.

### **Meet Our COVID-19 Scientists**

Multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) is a rare, potentially life-threatening syndrome that occurs about five weeks after some young patients have been infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19. There are widely accepted protocols for treating MIS-C, but just what causes it remains a mystery. Now, a team led by Dusan Bogunovic, PhD, has identified a unique pattern of immune responses that characterize MIS-C and could eventually serve as a biomarker, or reliable indicator that would help diagnose the disease. The findings were recently published in the journal [Cell](#). "In order for us to really understand MIS-C, we had to describe the disease, and this is the first in-depth mapping of what the disease looks like," Dr. Bogunovic says. Read more about the research [here](#).

## **Reminder About Wellness Resources**

Many of us are feeling increasingly stressed and overwhelmed these days, and not just because of the COVID-19 pandemic and current uptick in cases. We are worried about coping with school reopenings (and for some, reclosings), family issues, the approach of cooler weather, less opportunity for outdoor gatherings and impending social isolation, and all else going on in the world. It can feel overwhelming. Now is a good time for all of us to remember the [faculty, staff, and trainee wellness resources](#) that we have put together. They are here to help you meet your emotional, mental health, and spiritual needs. Please consider reaching out and exploring these resources.

I'll be updating you weekly while the current uptick continues. As long as we keep working together, we will overcome it as we have so many times before. I remain proud to be working by your side.

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