

COVID-19 Health System Updates

September 22, 2021, Wednesday

So many of you worked for so long on our employee vaccination drive over the last few months. I want to start by thanking you, again and again, for that effort. It was truly successful. The vast majority of our Mount Sinai family got vaccinated by the deadline, which was great to see.

For those of you who applied for religious exemptions, we are working through those submissions and will contact each of you individually, at the email address you put on your application.

Everyone who has either been granted a medical or religious exemption from vaccination, or whose exemption request is still pending, needs to be tested weekly for SARS-CoV-2 starting next week. We'll be communicating details of the testing program directly to these employees and their managers by email this week. There is also a [web page](#) with information about the program for anyone who needs it.

With the employee vaccination drive nearly over, we'll soon be turning our primary focus back to vaccinating patients—including, quite possibly, new groups of patients.

As you may have seen, an advisory panel of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommended last week that third vaccine doses be offered to people who got the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and who are 65 or older, or who are at high risk for severe COVID-19 or exposure to COVID-19. That last group would likely include health care workers, emergency responders, and teachers.

Several more steps are needed before we can start offering these shots. The full FDA has to accept the panel's recommendation; then the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has to weigh in; finally, the New York State Department of Health has to authorize the shots. The FDA and ACIP may act as soon as later this week. I will let you know when the process is complete and we are ready to start offering these doses to our employees

and patients. Again, this is just for the Pfizer vaccine; third doses of the Moderna vaccine and second doses of Johnson & Johnson are not included in the current proposal.

Also this week, Pfizer announced that it had submitted data to the FDA showing that its vaccine is safe and effective in children ages 5 to 11. It will likely take the FDA a few weeks to act on an emergency use authorization for the vaccine in those children. I will keep you posted.

As of this morning, we had 103 COVID-19-positive inpatients across the system, 18 of whom were in critical care. The New York State seven-day average test positivity rates as of yesterday stood at 1.9 percent for New York City, 3.8 percent for Long Island, and 3.1 percent for the mid-Hudson region.

We are on a journey that sometimes feels like it never will end. But this week's developments have definitely taken it on a new turn, and one that I truly believe will put us on an easier path than the one we've been on this summer. Thank you again for everything you have done, and will continue to do, for our patients and our colleagues. You make me prouder than ever to wear the Mount Sinai badge alongside you.

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