

March 15, 2024

To our patients,

We would like to update you on the recent additional guidelines from the CDC regarding COVID-19 vaccines and also respiratory precautions.

Vaccines

Those ages 65 and older are eligible to receive another dose of the updated version of the COVID-19 vaccine which was initially available in the fall of 2023. The most recent data shows that those who are up to date on vaccination have a lower risk of hospitalization and death. You should receive this dose at least 4 months after your last dose of the vaccine or from your most recent COVID-19 infection. If you have questions, you may contact our office. The vaccine is available at most pharmacies and either the MODERNA or PFIZER vaccine can be used.

New respiratory illness guidance

New guidance regarding precautions for protecting against the spread of respiratory illness, including COVID-19, has been provided by CDC. The current recommendations are the following:

If you have a respiratory illness, which may be characterized by symptoms including cough, congestion, sore throat, fever, sinus pressure or pain, or headache, please use the following guidelines:

- 1) Use at-home tests for available respiratory viruses; current over the counter tests include rapid COVID and flu. Combined flu and covid tests are available on amazon and some pharmacies and may be more readily available soon. COVID tests are readily available for purchase online or at the pharmacy. If you test positive for COVID-19 or influenza, you should call to discuss whether or not prescription anti-viral prescription medication is an option for you.
- 2) Use medications to treat symptoms. Medications that are generally safe for anyone to use include the following:
 - Acetaminophen (Tylenol) for fever or body aches, up to a maximum of 3000mg/day from all combined sources.
 - Guaifenesin (Mucinex) for congestion up to a maximum of 2400mg per day, available in extended release or immediate release formulations

- Dextromethorphan (Robitussin, Delsym) for cough 20mg every 6 hours, or 60mg extended release twice per day, maximum of 120mg per day

3) Stay home and away from others until you have had BOTH

- an improvement in your symptoms AND no fever without medications for at least 24 hours.

4) Take precautions for an additional 5 days after you meet the conditions in #3 above. Those precautions include:

- Masking for 5 days when around others

- Distancing when possible

- If your initial covid or flu test was positive, you may take additional precautions to either extend masking and/or to avoid contact with immunocompromised or at-risk individuals. Retesting for confirmation of a negative home test can help assure you for when you are non-infectious to others, in particular if you are concerned about exposing high-risk or immunocompromised individuals. The clinic is considered an environment where high risk individuals could be exposed. Testing still has a role in protecting the community, and we recommend you keep COVID-19 tests available at home, as we will also require testing before you come to the office for evaluation of your respiratory illness. This helps us properly evaluate you and protect others in the clinic.

Clinic Policies for Masking

We will follow the same guidelines that hospitals and clinics in the area are following for generalized masking policies. These guidelines are on the basis of community rates of respiratory illness. When the rates of respiratory illness are high in the community, masking will be required for all clinic visits, regardless of the reason for your visit.

When respiratory rates have fallen below the threshold to require universal masking, we will still require masking for the following:

1) If you have any current respiratory symptoms

2) If you have fever

Additionally, please note that if you have had a COVID-19 infection within the prior 2 weeks to your upcoming visit, we will ask you to ensure a negative COVID-19 test before your visit even if you are symptom-free at the time. This is to protect other compromised individuals who may be present in the clinic.

This is an ever-changing landscape with a lot of information. As always, feel free to call for any questions or concerns. We will continue to monitor the data as it becomes available and appreciate your help to maintain a safe and healthy space for all of us.

Sincerely,

Drs Kaner, Lee and Mills