

# UT Southwestern Medical Center

## COVID-19 campus operations update

Dec. 22, 2021

To the UT Southwestern Community:

Last Friday, I wrote to provide an update on our efforts to monitor the spread and prevalence of COVID-19 across our region and amongst the UT Southwestern community. Since that time, we have seen a rapid increase in the number of positive COVID-19 samples identified by our sequencing group as the Omicron variant. Today, I am writing to communicate an update to campus operations.

Given the uncertainty and out of an abundance of caution, we have decided it is time to be proactive in some of the ways we can help reduce the risk of transmission and its impact. At my request, the Emergency Operations Committee (EOC) met earlier this week and based on their recommendations, we will implement a number of changes to our campus operations, effective immediately:

- All in-person meetings and gatherings will again be limited to 10 people and, whenever possible, physical distancing is required. Regardless of meeting or gathering size, food and drink are prohibited to help reduce the risk of spread.
- Common areas and food courts will remain open, but we are asking individuals to refrain from eating or drinking with others in break rooms due to the more enclosed space. These spaces have been a significant source of on-campus transmissions in past surges.
- Visitors to campus will be limited to mission-critical activities only. Exceptions may be made by myself, an Executive Vice President, or a Department Chair.
- In the hospital, beginning this weekend, visitors will be limited to two per patient. In our ambulatory clinics, we are not adding any visitor restrictions at this time.
- Masks are still required in all clinical buildings, including hospitals and clinics, and areas where there are no patients, e.g., William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital Education and Conference Center. Universal masking indoors in nonclinical areas continues to be strongly encouraged, regardless of vaccination status.
- If you have ANY SYMPTOMS that *could* reflect a viral infection, please consult with Occupational Health and avoid contact with others even if you have been vaccinated.

Again, I urge those who have not yet chosen to receive the vaccine to sign up. If you are eligible, I also encourage you to receive a booster shot, which appears to substantially improve protection against the Omicron variant. Employees can schedule COVID-19 vaccine shots and booster doses through [MyChart](#) or the [UTSW.net site](#). We continue to offer vaccinations to the public as well. For more information and scheduling, please visit our [COVID-19 page](#).

As I have emphasized in the past, our top priority throughout the pandemic has been – and continues to be – the safety of our campus community and our patients and their families so that we may continue to fulfill our mission to promote health and a healthy society. I encourage you to submit any questions or

concerns you may have to [covid-19questions@utsouthwestern.edu](mailto:covid-19questions@utsouthwestern.edu), and I will do my best to answer them during my next briefing, which is scheduled for next **Wednesday, December 29**.

Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.  
President, UT Southwestern Medical Center