

Updates to the University COVID-19 Contact Tracing and Cleaning Protocols



COVID-19, the illness caused by infection with SARS-CoV-2, is a respiratory virus that is transmitted primarily via person-to-person passage of respiratory droplets and aerosols. As the COVID-19 pandemic has persisted, evidence-based science indicates that transmission of COVID-19 via fomite – objects or surfaces potentially contaminated with the virus – is uncommon. Frequent, thorough handwashing or use of alcohol-based sanitizer remains the most effective method of reducing transmission via this route.

Columbia University has recently updated its approach to *reporting of positive cases, contact tracing, and facilities cleaning*, since we are a fully vaccinated university, and announced a *new vaccine booster mandate*.

Columbia University Contact Tracing is prioritizing support for positive cases and will continue to provide outreach, guidance and resources for individuals who test positive for COVID-19, however Contact Tracing will no longer identify and notify close contacts. Instead, **individuals testing positive are encouraged (but not required) to [immediately identify and notify those with whom they have knowingly been in close contact](#)**, so the individuals are aware and can take appropriate actions. It is important to understand that although you may not be notified directly in the event you are considered a close contact, it does not mean you are NOT a close contact or have not been exposed.

Reporting of positive cases to schools and departments - Detailed notifications to school and department administrators or liaisons will no longer be provided; instead, Columbia Health will send a weekly summary.

Close Contact - If you have [knowingly been in close contact](#) with anyone testing positive for COVID-19 (within 6 feet for over 10 minutes in a single instance, or within 6 feet for over a cumulative time of 15 minutes or more within a 24-hour period), [take appropriate actions](#) (this depends whether individuals are [fully vaccinated](#) or [unvaccinated](#) and whether currently experiencing symptoms). The period of COVID-19 transmissibility starts **two days prior** to experiencing symptoms or if no symptoms, two days prior to testing positive.

- **For fully vaccinated close contacts:** only individuals who show symptoms of COVID-19 should quarantine. Testing is recommended 5-7 days after known exposure. Monitor your symptoms and wear a mask indoors in public. Immediately self-isolate if any symptoms develop or you test positive.
- **If exposed and not fully vaccinated** (defined as being two or more weeks after the final dose of a vaccine authorized by the FDA or WHO): e-mail covidtesttrace@columbia.edu to receive a follow-up call from the University to discuss next steps, and [isolate](#) pending further guidance.
- **If experiencing COVID-like symptoms:** isolate and take a COVID-19 test, and/or contact your primary care clinician for additional medical guidance.
- **Clinical staff at CUIMC** should review [COVID-19 Information and Resources for Clinical Staff](#).
- Information and resources are outlined in the [Coronavirus Isolation Guide for Faculty and Staff](#).

Facilities cleaning - To date, there has not been any confirmed transmission between individuals touching surfaces, therefore outside of the enhanced, routine cleaning that is already occurring, no additional cleaning is indicated. It is still recommended that you continue to practice standard [daily hygiene, including cleaning of your personal work station and shared office equipment](#), as well as [shared laboratory equipment](#). All public spaces will continue to be cleaned daily by Facilities.

Vaccine Booster - the University's current vaccination mandate has been expanded to require booster doses for all faculty, staff and students who meet the criteria for eligibility. Compliance with the vaccine booster mandate will be necessary by **January 31, 2022**. Review the [new booster mandate](#) for additional details. Information for faculty and staff on how and when to upload vaccine information will be provided in early January, and students can upload through their student health portal.

The University currently remains at the Alert Level: [LOW RISK \(Yellow\)](#); however, the situation remains changeable, so please see the [COVID-19 Monitoring Plan](#) for updates.