

COVID-19 Update

November 24: IDPH Tier 3 Mitigation Measures, Chicago Quarantine Exceptions for Healthcare Workers, CDC Thanksgiving Travel Guidelines, Vaccine Update and #MaskUp Campaign

Today's issue features information about the new Illinois Tier 3 mitigation measures and City of Chicago Travel Order exceptions for healthcare providers, as well as updates to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Thanksgiving travel guidelines. It also includes an update on vaccine development and Northwestern Medicine's plans for distribution.

NEW IDPH TIER 3 MITIGATION MEASURES

With COVID-19 spread now significantly increasing in every region of the state, our statewide positivity rate is at record highs and hospitalizations already surpassing the spring peak, the **Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) announced** last week that all 11 regions of Illinois would move to Tier 3 effective November 20. Tier 3 guidelines state:

- Limit all non-essential travel.
- Limit in-home gatherings to household members.
- Meeting rooms, banquet centers, private party rooms, private clubs and country clubs may not host gatherings.
- All bars and restaurants must close at 11 pm and may reopen no earlier than 6 am the following day, with no indoor service allowed.
- All employees who can work remotely should work remotely.
- Health and fitness centers can operate at no more than 25% capacity, with no indoor group classes.
- Casinos and indoor recreation centers — including theater, performing arts centers and indoor museums — should close.

IDPH will continue to track positivity rates and hospital capacity metrics in all regions over 14-day monitoring periods to determine if mitigations can be relaxed, if additional mitigations are required, or if current mitigation should remain in place. In order for a region to move back to Tier 2 mitigations, it must have **all of the following**:

- Less than a 12% seven-day average test positivity rate for three consecutive days
- Greater than 20% available ICU and hospital bed availability for three consecutive days
- A declining seven-day average of COVID-19 hospitalizations for seven out of the past 10 days

Follow the latest regional metrics on the [IDPH website](#).

CDPH EXCEPTIONS TO TRAVEL QUARANTINE REQUIREMENTS

The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) has added new exceptions to the [City of Chicago Travel Order](#) for healthcare workers in order to help maintain healthcare system staffing capacity. The new CDPH exceptions also state that healthcare workers traveling for important personal or family reasons (such as to check on or provide care for an elderly parent who lives alone) are not subject to mandatory quarantine after returning from out-of-state travel. View the [CDPH Health Alert](#) for more information.

CDC THANKSGIVING TRAVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

As cases of COVID-19 continue to increase rapidly across the U.S., the CDC has issued new guidelines regarding holiday travel. If you are considering traveling for Thanksgiving, the CDC recommends some important questions to ask yourself and your loved ones beforehand to help you decide what is best for you and your family:

- Are you, someone in your household, or someone you will be visiting at increased risk for getting very sick from COVID-19?
- Are cases high or increasing in your community or your destination?
- Are hospitals in your community or your destination overwhelmed with patients who have COVID-19? To find out, check state and local public health department websites.
- Does your home or destination have requirements or restrictions for travelers?
- During the 14 days before you travel, have you or those you are visiting had close contact with people they don't live with?
- Do your plans include traveling by bus, train or air, which might make staying 6 feet apart difficult?
- Are you traveling with people who don't live with you?

If the answer to any of these questions is “yes,” you should consider making other plans, such as hosting a virtual gathering or delaying your travel. For more information, please visit the [Celebrating Thanksgiving page](#) on the CDC website.

COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATE

Several COVID-19 vaccines are in late-stage development, and [Pfizer and BioNTech have submitted an Emergency Use Authorization Request](#) to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for their vaccine. We anticipate that the FDA will authorize one or more for emergency use within the next few weeks. Despite the encouraging news, vaccine availability will be limited initially, and a focus on mitigation strategies remains our best line of defense against infection.

The first two vaccines that provided results, from Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna, utilize a novel technology—mRNA. These vaccines take the genetic code for the spike protein and coat it with a lipid nanoparticle. This allows the vaccine to be injected into the arm. From there, the RNA enters the cells, and the cells' machinery turns the RNA sequence into the spike protein that is presented on the surface of the cell. There is no actual virus, and only the spike protein is produced. This allows the immune system to respond to the spike protein, and antibodies and cellular immune responses develop, which in turn help to protect the individual from infection.

Data from the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine shows that it is 95% effective in a study of 43,000 subjects. It is 94% effective in those who are 65 and older, suggesting it retains effectiveness across all ages studied. In study participants who developed infection, most had mild cases. The vaccine was well

tolerated with mild symptoms, including fatigue, pain and swelling at the injection site, and muscle and joint aches that improved quickly. The vaccine requires two doses, 21 days apart.

Similarly, data from the Moderna vaccine study shows that it is 94.5% effective, and breakthrough infections were mild. The vaccine was generally safe, and also requires two doses, 28 days apart. Moderna says it will have 20 million doses (enough to vaccinate 10 million individuals) by the end of the year.

AstraZeneca/Oxford University also announced preliminary findings from their adenovirus-vector vaccine trial in the United Kingdom and Brazil. The study has enrolled only 11,636 adults in two regimens: The low-dose regimen is 90% effective, and the full-dose regimen was 62% efficacious. While this represents another option, more data will be needed globally, including an ongoing study in the U.S., to fully define safety and efficacy of this vaccine.

While these results are encouraging, they have to be tempered by the fact that it will take several weeks before the FDA issues emergency authorization for use, and several months before there is enough vaccine available for the entire U.S. population. A staged roll-out of the vaccines will initially go to front-line healthcare workers and first responders. The second group will be high-risk patients and older adults in long-term care facilities. These two groups represent 70 to 100 million Americans, and as such, vaccine availability will be insufficient for all that need it initially. Vaccine production is expected to improve over time, but it may be late spring or early summer before everyone in the U.S. will have an opportunity to get vaccinated. Until then, we need to follow our current strategies to prevent infection with COVID-19, including wearing masks, practicing physical distancing and performing good hand hygiene.

When COVID-19 vaccines become available, NM physicians and employees will have the opportunity to be vaccinated in a phased manner. Unlike the annual flu shot, participation in the COVID-19 vaccine effort will be voluntary. More information will be provided once vaccine availability is confirmed.

Information about the vaccines, the government planning efforts and frequently asked questions can be found [here](#).

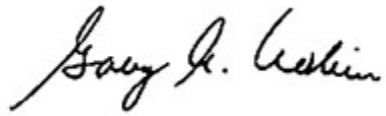
NATIONAL CAMPAIGN ENCOURAGES AMERICANS TO #MASKUP

NM has joined over 100 health systems, representing thousands of hospitals in communities across the U.S., with an urgent plea for all Americans: Mask up. Wearing a face mask is one of the most effective ways to slow the spread of COVID-19.

A public service message is now running in several national media outlets, including *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post* and the TODAY Show. NM is uniting with other local health systems to share the message regionally.

To learn more, visit the campaign website at everymaskup.com.

Thank you to all NM physicians and clinicians for your continued commitment to providing safe, high-quality, *Patients First* care, and best wishes to you and your family for a safe and happy Thanksgiving.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gary A. Noskin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gary" and last name "Noskin" clearly legible.

Gary A. Noskin, MD
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