

## COVID-19 UPDATED HEALTH GUIDANCE

Effective Spring 2024, the Atlanta University Center Consortium institutions will adhere to the updated COVID-19/respiratory virus health guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The new guidance summarized below brings a unified approach to addressing a wide range of common respiratory viral illnesses such as COVID-19, Flu and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV).

### What should I do if I test positive for COVID-19 or experience respiratory viral symptoms?

Community members should follow the [new CDC guidance](#):

- **Stay home and away from others,**
- **Resume normal activities when symptoms are improving, and you are fever-free (without the use of fever medication) for at least 24 hours.**

### What added precautions can I take if I test positive for COVID-19 or experience respiratory viral symptoms?

Community members should take added precautions for 5 days which include:

- **Medical care:** Get medical care from your health care provider when there are medical concerns or if symptoms persist. Always follow the guidance and treatment plan of your medical provider.
- **Self-care:** Engage in enhanced hygiene practices of hand washing and respiratory care, wear a mask, keep a distance from others, take steps

to improve air ventilation at home and consider getting tested for respiratory viruses.

Self-care precautions are especially important for those 65 years and older, individuals with a weakened immune system or preexisting health conditions and for anyone who may have been exposed to a respiratory virus.

### **Why has the CDC discontinued the 5-day COVID-19 isolation requirement and where can I find additional information regarding the updated CDC COVID-19 guidance?**

- The CDC has discontinued the mandatory 5-day isolation period due to availability of vaccines and treatments for COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses. Population immunity to COVID-19 is high with more than 98% of the U.S. population having protective immunity against COVID-19 from vaccination, prior infection, or both. In addition, there are fewer hospitalizations and severe complications due to COVID-19 illness.
- Review the [CDC Respiratory Virus Update FAQ](#) for more answers to frequently asked questions regarding the new guidance.

### **What does “improving symptoms” or “symptoms are getting better” in the updated guidance mean?**

- This means that a person is starting to feel better, and the body is returning to normal after an infection. Symptoms can be used as simple indicators to help you make decisions about prevention strategies, such as how long to stay home or when to return to work or school.
- A respiratory virus infection can have many types of symptoms, some of which can last beyond when someone is infectious, such as a lingering cough. So having a single symptom or a combination of symptoms is

not as important as the overall sense of feeling better and the ability to resume activities. Fever is mentioned as a specific symptom in the guidance because people tend to be more infectious when they have a fever.

### **With the new CDC COVID-19 health guidance, are there any community considerations I should be aware of?**

Yes, with the end of the federal pandemic emergency response to COVID-19 and the new CDC guidance, please take note of important considerations:

**Students:** When absent from class due to COVID-19/respiratory viral illness seek medical care if symptoms become severe. For medical assistance, contact Student Health Services at 404-270-5249 or Public Safety at 404-525-6401 if it is after clinic hours.

**Staff:** When absent from work due to COVID-19/respiratory viral illness, see your medical provider if needed. Notify your supervisor of your absence and utilize sick leave for your absence. (Sick Leave Policy HR#307: if an employee is absent from work for 3 or more consecutive days due to illness, a physician statement must be provided to include clearance to return to work).

**Faculty:** When absent from work due to COVID-19/respiratory viral illness, see your medical provider if needed. Notify the department/program chair and division chair of your absence.

### **How can I protect myself and others when COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses are causing illness in the community?**

#### **Core prevention strategies:**

- Stay up to date with immunizations. The CDC recommends the updated COVID-19 and flu vaccine to protect against severe respiratory virus illness.
- Practice good hygiene, improve cleanliness and respiratory care.

- When possible, take steps for cleaner air and increase ventilation.
- When sick, stay home and seek health care promptly for testing and/or treatment if you have risk factors for severe illness.

**Additional prevention strategies:**

- Wear a mask
- Social distance when possible
- Consider testing as an option

**Layering prevention strategies can be especially helpful when:**

- Respiratory viruses are causing a lot of illness in the community.
- You or those around you have risk factors for severe illness.
- You or those around you are exposed to others who are sick.
- You live with or share a living space with someone who is sick.

**Are preventative self-care kits available?**

Yes. While supplies last, the College will continue to provide free access to masks, hand sanitizers and COVID-19 self-test kits to any student, faculty, or staff.

For COVID-19 related questions, support, or to pick up a self-care kit contact:

Yemi Brown PharmD, COVID-19 Operations Manager (Office: Rockefeller 300F, Email: [ibiyemibrown@spelman.edu](mailto:ibiyemibrown@spelman.edu) , Phone: 404-270-5407).

Students can also access free self-care kits from the MacVicar Students Health Services Lobby during regular business hours.