

COVID-19 and Other Respiratory Viruses Update

12 APR 2024

To: Students, Faculty, and Staff:

As many of you already know, both the CDC and GA DPH recently updated their guidance, including isolation period, for COVID-19. The update was based on a number of factors, including declining hospitalizations for COVID-19. The new guidelines are applicable to most all upper respiratory tract viruses, including COVID-19, Influenza A and B, and RSV. I summarize below the key points.

- 1) No longer are individuals required to isolate at home for 120 hours (5 full days) from symptom onset. In fact, the duration of isolation now is based on symptom severity and duration, and apply to all viruses causing upper respiratory tract symptoms. No exact number of isolation days are given. Specifically:
 - a. Regardless of the virus (known or unknown), isolate at home until symptoms are improving and you have been fever-free for at least 24 hours.
 - b. The CDC is a bit vague and inconsistent on defining fever, but generally use either the symptom of feeling warm (feverish) or about 100 degrees Fahrenheit in their guidance. In other words, if symptoms are improving, and at least 24 hours have passed with an oral (or tympanic membrane) temperature of less than 100 degrees (in the absence of anti-pyretics), then it is reasonable to return to in-person activities.
 - c. Note that not all the symptoms need to be improving (e.g., loss of taste/smell), and none of the symptoms need to have completely resolved. In other words, it is acceptable to return to in person activities when you are feeling better.
- 2) Implement additional precautions for 5 days upon returning to in person activities, including wearing a mask, paying more attention to hand hygiene, and social distancing.
- 3) Other than the changes noted above, specific recommendations for MCG students have not changed. Specifically:
 - a. Hospital-specific requirements vary by location and medical system; check with clerkship directors for current guidance.
 - b. Continue to notify clerkship directors, class Deans, and relevant faculty that you will not attend class due to illness. Failure to notify is likely to result in the absence being unexcused.

- c. AU Student Health (706-721-3448) and Dr. Rodger MacArthur (734-516-0204) are available as resources for any URI-related questions or concerns.
- d. Bottom line: If you feel sick, especially if you have a fever, stay home!