

Dear Einstein Community:

Your extraordinary cooperation in following Einstein's COVID-19 masking and social distancing policies and adhering to our vaccination mandate has enabled us to safely continue our research and educational programs over the past 17 months and return to near normal operations. A key part of this success has been due to modifying our recommendations in response to new scientific and public health information regarding the community incidence of COVID-19 and the protection offered by vaccines.

The recent emergence of the more infectious SARS-CoV-2 Delta variant and its ability to infect even vaccinated individuals has led to a new surge of COVID-19 infections, with a 7-day average of 1,597 new cases/day or 11,179 total cases reported in NYC this past week. The rate of infection in our Morris Park area based on testing has increased by greater than 10-fold in the past month from 0.35% as of July 3 to 4.5% on August 5.

### **New Campus Mask Requirement**

Several weeks ago, we followed CDC guidelines and gave vaccinated individuals the choice of going mask-free on campus. Now, in response to the resurgence of COVID-19 infections fueled by the emergence of the Delta variant, changing CDC recommendations, and our commitment to ensure the safety of Einstein community members, we are *requiring* that all individuals at Einstein—even vaccinated individuals—wear masks indoors at all times on campus; the new policy is effective Tuesday, August 10. This includes all common spaces, lecture halls, labs, offices, and public areas of all student housing. The *only* exception is when someone is working alone in a single-occupancy office with the door closed.

Additionally, to maximize safety, we strongly recommend that face coverings be medical-grade surgical masks—which will be available at all entry points and security stations—or N-95 masks, since we believe they offer the best protection against the airborne spread of COVID-19. We are making this policy change because recent studies indicate that single-ply cloth masks are not effective in

preventing viral spread.

At this time, all existing rules related to lab occupancy and social distancing remain unchanged and can be found on [our COVID-19 site](#). Other rules—pertaining to COVID-19 testing, requirements for twice-weekly COVID-19 testing for unvaccinated individuals, [reporting a new case](#), [limited exemptions](#), [visitors and volunteers](#), and [travel](#)—also remain the same.

### **The Rise of the Delta Variant**

Why are we adopting this new masking policy?

As we have all seen in recent news reports, the highly infectious Delta variant now accounts for nearly all cases in the U.S. The good news is that COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective in preventing severe disease and death, even from the Delta variant. Although “breakthrough” infections can occur in vaccinated individuals, they are rare and overwhelmingly accompanied by mild—or no—symptoms. However, evidence strongly suggests that even vaccinated, asymptomatic individuals can spread the virus to others.

As a medical institution, we must establish rules that reflect our responsibility for the health of those on campus as well as the wider community. That is particularly true for unvaccinated individuals, as well as the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions, who are more likely to have severe symptoms of the disease, even when vaccinated.

### **The Benefits of Vaccination**

Because of the extremely high rate of full vaccination in the Einstein community, nearly 93% and rising, our judgment is that with universal masking we can currently safely maintain our current pre-COVID-19 density levels without requiring the reinstatement of social distancing requirements for those who are vaccinated. We will continue to require all visitors and volunteers to show proof of vaccination to enter our campus as well.

As we’ve stressed repeatedly, we urge anyone who is eligible to be vaccinated to use Einstein’s resources to [get fully vaccinated](#). It is what will keep you and those around you safe, both at work and at home.

As always, our aim is to adjust our policies, when necessary, to protect the health

of our community. Thus, the recommendations contained in this latest COVID-19 update may be subject to change as conditions warrant.

In closing, we want to thank everyone for your continued flexibility, patience and understanding as we continue to deal with the COVID pandemic. Your cooperation is why Einstein is a safe place to work and study—and we want to keep it that way.

Sincerely,

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