

Infection Prevention

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

These guidelines were last updated 8/12/2020 and subject to modification. Please be sure to check these periodically. If you have further questions, please contact StudentInfectionPrevention@lists.mssm.edu.

Commonly Used Definitions

Close Contact: A person is considered a true close contact if they meet ALL of the following criteria for contact with a COVID positive individual:

- Less than 6 feet apart
- Greater than 15 minutes
- Either person unmasked
- Within 2 days of diagnosis

Contact Tracing: The identification and monitoring of individuals who may have potentially been exposed to a COVID-positive individual.

COVID-19 Antibody test: Antibody testing, also referred to as serologic testing, is a blood test that looks for evidence of past infection.

COVID-19 PCR test: The SARS-CoV-2 PCR test is a diagnostic test which is done with a nasopharyngeal swab and looks for viral RNA. A positive test most likely indicates current (active) infection. You can be PCR positive for COVID-19 both with and without symptoms.

Hand Hygiene: Washing your hands with soap and water, or rubbing your hands together with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, for at least 20 seconds.

High-Risk Area: An area with a 10% test positivity rate over a 7-day rolling average as listed on New York State's [travel advisory list](#), plus other regions deemed high-risk by Infection Prevention.

Isolation: Isolation is indicated when someone has already tested positive for an infectious disease (including COVID-19) and therefore must remain in isolation so as not to expose others.

Personal Travel: Any travel within the United States or abroad for personal reasons, such as vacations or trips to visit family and friends. Personal travel (Domestic and International) is not sponsored by Mount Sinai nor is it covered by Mount Sinai travel insurance. Personal travel is not recommended and students should be aware that anyone traveling is doing so at their own risk. Students who choose to engage in personal travel may have to arrange their own testing upon return and housing outside of Aron Hall, in the case of isolation.

Quarantine: Quarantine refers to a precautionary measure taken after potential exposure to COVID-19, such as travel or a close contact.

Social Distancing: Trying to maintain 6 feet of distance between people whenever possible.



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Overall Testing Strategy

The overall COVID-19 testing strategy is multi-pronged with the overall goal of identifying, testing and isolating members of our community who have COVID-19. These strategies are listed below:

- Testing at-risk travelers
- Testing symptomatic students
- Testing new incoming students into Aron Hall
- Testing all close contacts
- Performing a point prevalence of infection by doing baseline testing of all medical students in late July
- Robust isolation and quarantine protocols
- Contact tracing protocols linking students to the Health System

Testing strategy flow-sheet protocols can be viewed [here](#).

What Happens If I Test Positive for COVID-19?

Isolation:

If you test positive for COVID-19, then you will need to isolate for 10 days from the date of your positive test, or the onset of symptoms. Students living outside of Aron Hall will self-isolate in their own residence. Students residing in Aron Hall will self-isolate at another location. Currently, Mount Sinai has been offering temporary housing located at 3 East 101st St. As noted in the travel section of this FAQ document, we cannot guarantee housing to students who choose to travel for pleasure due to Mount Sinai's limited housing resources. Therefore, these students may have to arrange their own housing during this isolation period.

If I need to isolate, whether in my living quarters or at a temporary housing location outside of Aron Hall, what will be the curricular impact?

As soon as we are aware of your situation, we will notify Student Affairs and they will be in touch with you regarding any curricular impact. You are always welcome to reach out to Student Affairs (student.affairs@mssm.edu) or your advisor for further support.

As a student living in Aron Hall, under what circumstances would I need to arrange for my own housing (outside of Aron Hall) during the isolation period?

As stated above, if you live in Aron Hall and test positive for COVID-19, isolation must occur outside of your living quarters. Due to Mount Sinai's limited housing resources, we cannot guarantee housing for students choosing to travel. Therefore, if you have traveled for personal reasons, you may have to arrange your own housing outside of Aron Hall during the 10-day isolation period. For further information related to travel, please refer to the travel section of this FAQ document and the student Travel Policy.

Can I get groceries delivered to me at this temporary housing location?

Yes.



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Can I do my laundry at this temporary housing location?

Yes, if necessary. If you decide to do laundry, please wear a face mask and wipe down all surfaces before and after use.

Can I go out for walks or go jogging as long as I wear a face mask and practice social distancing?

Ideally, it is preferred that you exercise in your room. We strongly discourage going outside, however if you must, please wear a face mask and practice social distancing in order to avoid exposing others.

Can I go to the pharmacy to pick up medication?

Yes, if necessary, however delivery is preferred.

Quarantine

Must I self-quarantine while awaiting my PCR test results?

Yes. It is important that you behave as if you are positive while you wait for your results.

During self-quarantine, what activities may I engage in?

Please try to limit any activities outside of your living quarters during this time. If you do need to go out, please adhere to social distancing rules and wear a face mask at all times. Although we ask that you avoid situations where you may interact with others, you must wear a face mask over your nose and mouth while picking up food/package deliveries, doing laundry in your building, going for a walk or jog outside, or going to pharmacies to pick up medications. Lastly, feel free to reach out to your advisors if you need further assistance.

Travel

I am planning on traveling outside of the tri-state area (NY/NJ/CT). What do I need to do before I leave?

First, you must complete the [Student Travel Registration Form](#). Please complete this form at least one week in advance of any planned travel. Submit one form per trip.

If you are traveling due to an emergency, to take a STEP exam, or other extenuating circumstances, someone will be in touch with you to schedule PCR testing upon your return (if applicable).

Please note that the school highly discourages any personal/leisure travel at this time. If you still choose to travel for pleasure, please note that you may have to schedule your own PCR testing at a NYC testing facility, where turnaround times are highly variable. In addition, you may be required to quarantine upon your return. Any of these possibilities can result in a disruption of your educational program.

I am traveling to a high-risk area. If I test negative for COVID-19 upon my return to campus, do I need to self-quarantine?

Yes. Even if you test negative for COVID-19 when you return to campus, you will be subject to a mandatory self-quarantine for 14 days according to the [New York State Travel Advisory](#) issued by Governor Andrew Cuomo. This can be done in your current residence, including Aron Hall.



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If I am a student living in Aron Hall and travel to a high-risk area, can I quarantine in Aron Hall upon my return?

Yes. If you are a student living in Aron Hall and are returning from a high-risk area, you will have to quarantine for 14 days, and may do so in Aron Hall. Please note that you must complete the 14 day quarantine according to the New York State Travel Advisory, even if your test comes back negative.

I am traveling to a high-risk area and/or international location. If I test positive for COVID-19 upon my return to campus, will I need to self-quarantine?

If you return to campus from a high-risk area and/or international location and test positive for COVID-19, then you will need to **self-isolate** for 10 days from the date of your positive test or the onset of symptoms. We will provide housing (outside of Aron Hall) during the isolation period for students who traveled to take a STEP exam, for an emergency, or any other extenuating circumstances. However, Sinai's housing resources are limited and we cannot guarantee availability to students who choose to travel for pleasure. Therefore, students who engage in such travel may have to arrange their own housing during this isolation period. Please read about our isolation protocol for further details on housing arrangements during this period.

I am traveling to a location that is currently not a high-risk area and that is within the United States. If I test negative for COVID-19 upon my return to campus, will I need to self-quarantine?

No. If you return to campus from a non high-risk area and test negative for COVID-19, then you do not need to self-quarantine and may resume your clinical, curricular, research or lab activities. Testing may or may not be indicated, depending on where you have traveled. If it is determined that you be given a PCR test, please remember that you must act as though you are positive while you await your test results. Please refer to our quarantine protocol for further information on activities you may engage in during this period. Please note that the list of high-risk states changes on a regular basis.

For further information related to travel, please view the most recently updated student [Travel Policy](#).

Testing for Symptomatic Students

Symptoms related to COVID-19 may include:

- Fever (temperature greater than 100° Fahrenheit)
- Chills
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- New onset persistent cough
- Nasal congestion and runny nose not associated with allergies
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue (new or not explained by a pre-existing condition)
- Headaches (new or not explained by a pre-existing condition)
- Generalized muscle and body aches (new or not explained by a pre-existing condition)



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If I have symptoms, can I get a PCR test?

All symptomatic students should stay home and contact their provider or Student Health (by email: studenthealth@mssm.edu or phone: 212-241-6023) for possible evaluation. Based on our clinical assessment, we may coordinate a PCR test.

For further information on test results, quarantine, and isolation protocols, please review the other sections in this FAQ document.

Testing for Personal Reasons

Can I get a PCR test done at Mount Sinai for personal reasons (when it is not required by the school)?

If you want to get tested for personal reasons (when it is not required by the school), you should arrange your own testing, as Student Health does not have the capacity to accommodate these requests. You can get tested at [another site at Mount Sinai](#), or at one of the testing sites throughout the city (<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/find-test-site-near-you>). Currently all testing in New York City is free.

As stated in the travel section of this FAQ document, the school highly discourages any personal/leisure travel at this time. Please note that if you choose to travel for personal reasons, you may have to arrange your own PCR testing upon your return, in addition to your own housing during isolation, in the case of a positive PCR test result if you live in Aron Hall.

Incoming Students* Living in Aron Hall

I am a new incoming student moving into Aron Hall from a high-risk area. What specific quarantine protocol do I need to follow?

You may move your belongings into Aron Hall, however you must quarantine outside of your living quarters. You will be given a PCR test and must quarantine outside of Aron Hall for a total of 14 days regardless of a negative test result.

For further information on quarantine or isolation, in the case of a positive PCR test result, please review the other sections in this FAQ document.

I am a new incoming student moving into Aron Hall from a non high-risk area. What specific quarantine protocol do I need to follow?

You may move your belongings into Aron Hall, however you must quarantine outside of your living quarters while awaiting testing. You will be given a PCR test and must quarantine outside of your permanent Aron Hall apartment until you receive your test result.

If you receive a positive PCR test result, you must follow the isolation protocol as detailed in the other sections of this FAQ document. However, if you receive a negative PCR test result, you may move into Aron Hall.



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I am a new incoming student moving into Aron Hall from the tri-state area. What specific quarantine protocol do I need to follow?

You may move your belongings into Aron Hall and will get PCR tested. You must act as though you could be positive while you self-quarantine in your room and wait for your test results.

If you receive a positive PCR test result, you must follow the isolation protocol as detailed in the other sections of this FAQ document. However, if you receive a negative PCR test result, you may remain in Aron Hall and resume activities.

**First-year medical students and grad students starting a new program*

Close Contact

I have been in close contact with a student who has tested positive for COVID-19. Is it possible for me to get a PCR test? If you have been identified as a close contact (see definition) you will need to quarantine for 14 days. On day 5-7 of exposure, you will be PCR tested. However, even if your PCR test is negative, you will need to complete the full 14-day quarantine period.

In the event that I need to self-quarantine as a close contact, is there an official form or email that I can send to my course directors?

Yes, you may email medstudentabsence@mssm.edu.

What happens if I receive a positive PCR test result?

If you test positive for COVID-19, then you will need to isolate for 10 days from the date of your positive test, or the onset of symptoms. Please see the isolation protocol in this FAQ document for further information.

What happens if I receive a negative PCR test?

Even if you test negative for COVID-19, as a close contact, you will still need to finish your 14-day quarantine. For further information, please read the quarantine protocol in this FAQ document.

What about contact tracing?

If you test positive for COVID-19, you will be contacted by both New York City and Mount Sinai Hospital contact tracers who will ask you about people you may have been in close contact with over the 48 hours prior to your positive test result.

Baseline PCR Testing

Who is required to get PCR tested?

All students living in Aron Hall, or any medical students learning or rotating in a Mount Sinai hospital or campus facility were required to get baseline PCR testing between Thursday July 23, 2020 and Friday July 31, 2020.



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Who was exempt from getting PCR tested?

The following students were exempt:

- Students not participating in any campus or hospital activities AND who do not live in Aron Hall;
- Students not in New York at the time of testing;
- Students who had already received a PCR test on or after July 15;
- Students with a documented positive COVID-19 antibody test done at Mount Sinai;
- Students with a documented positive COVID-19 PCR test done anywhere

Where does PCR testing take place?

PCR testing occurs in the ambulatory tent behind Annenberg (enter through the black gate on Fifth Avenue between E 100-101st St.) and does not accept walk-ins.

When and how will I receive my test results?

You will be able to access your test results on MyChart. Usually your test results will arrive in 8 hours.

How will this testing strategy be effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19 on campus?

We are hoping that by PCR testing all students in Aron Hall and those who work, study and live in our spaces, we will obtain a baseline point-prevalence of COVID-19 in our student community. This will allow us to isolate individuals who may be asymptomatic to prevent further spread as well as consider other public health measures as necessary. In addition, we continue to require face coverings, social distancing, and hand washing to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Baseline Antibody Testing

Mount Sinai continues to perform antibody testing on all graduate students residing in Aron Hall and all medical students, irrespective of living quarters.

I had antibody testing in the spring, do I need to repeat the test?

No. As long as your antibody test was conducted at Mount Sinai, you do not need another antibody test at this time.

I had an antibody test performed outside of Mount Sinai, do I need to repeat the antibody test?

Yes, the antibody test performed at Mount Sinai is the gold standard.

Can I get antibody tested while in quarantine?

No, you must not get antibody tested until you have finished out the quarantine period.

Where does antibody testing take place?

Antibody testing can be scheduled at the Student Health Center.



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How do I sign up for testing?

Please call Student Health at 212-241-6023 during regular business hours to schedule an appointment.

When and how will I receive my results?

Results will be available in MyChart in about 48 hours.