



Doubling down to protect ourselves from COVID

A message to CMH team members from CMH Incident Commander Kris Chaisson, MS, BSN, RN, CCRN, CMMC VP of Nursing and Patient Care Services, and Chief Medical Officer John Alexander, MD, MD, MHCM, FACEP

With so many developments on the COVID front recently, we wanted to update you on a few things we'll soon be rolling out.

First, we want to stress that the safety of the facilities where we work and care for patients remains a top priority. We continue our strict adherence to all CDC and Department of Health and Human Services infection prevention protocols. Please remember that **universal masking, hand hygiene and daily screening are still mandatory**. If you have the sniffles or a "mild summer cold," you must indicate that on your daily questionnaire. These precautions, along with aggressive disinfecting, strict PPE use and the isolation of potential COVID patients, are keeping our facilities safe for us and our patients.

This is especially important as the highly contagious Delta variant and other strains pose a growing threat to the progress that Maine and the United States have made against the coronavirus. **After weeks of decline in COVID, Maine is seeing another upswing in cases. The rate of cases has nearly doubled in recent weeks.**

Our vaccination rate is not where it needs to be. We are deeply concerned that our unvaccinated team members could be exposed to the virus in the community and be at risk for serious illness, hospitalization or even worse. Community exposure – not exposure in the workplace – accounts for the overwhelming vast majority of COVID among team members.

While no vaccine is 100% effective, the COVID vaccines are remarkably good at protecting people. In the U.S., **unvaccinated people account for more than 97 percent of COVID hospitalizations**. We urge you to get the vaccine if you can – for your own health and for what it would mean for your families and the fellow team members who depend on you.

We are doubling down on our efforts to protect team members. You'll soon be seeing:

- Team member meetings where you can talk to peers about vaccination and ask our subject matter experts questions;
- A roving team to bring the vaccine to team members where you work;
- Additional educational materials through our internal communications channels;
- Continued vaccine availability at our [high-volume vaccination site at the Auburn Mall](#) through at least September; and
- Regular testing of unvaccinated team members so we can know as soon as possible if a team member is at risk of getting sick.

With nearly 190 million doses administered nationwide so far, the vaccines are well understood and researched. In addition to being safe and highly effective, they are key to halting the mutations and ending the pandemic. **We want everyone who can get vaccinated to get vaccinated.**

More details will be coming. If you have questions, please ask your leaders and they can connect you to resources.

Please take the precautions to keep yourselves, your families, our patients and one another healthy and safe.

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