Hi Team –

I am excited to share that we've reached yet another major milestone on our journey to end this pandemic and return to a more normal way of life! Last week, the CDC updated its mask-wearing guidance for fully vaccinated individuals based on the rising percentage of those in the U.S. now vaccinated, along with the continued decline in new COVID cases. And these encouraging trends are consistent with what we are experiencing here at TriHealth and across the region (see sidebar). For similar reasons, Governor DeWine also announced last week that the state mask mandate will be lifted on June 2, except for within nursing homes and assisted living facilities. The Governor's latest guidance does allow for businesses such as healthcare providers and schools to make their own decisions on the best way to keep customers, patients, employees, and students safe.

COVID-19 Weekly Update

- **22** COVID-positive patients in TriHealth hospitals with **2** on ventilators in the ICU.

- **3.0%** COVID positivity rate overall, with a **6.5%** positivity rate for symptomatic patients tested at TriHealth over past two weeks. Target positivity rate is under 5%!

- Please stay VIGILANT about practicing COVID Always Behaviors...

  - Wear masks
  - Social distance
  - Stay home when sick
  - Hand Hygiene
  - Gatherings of 10 or less

This exciting news is a monumental proof point that the COVID vaccine is safe, it's working, and it is the most effective and *only* way to put this pandemic behind us and get back to living life to the fullest!! However, as the region's largest health system with the core responsibility of ensuring the safety of all of our patients and team members at all times, we are carefully considering how best to interpret and apply this new guidance across our clinical and non-clinical settings. This is especially important because we still have a long way to go to reach the 70-80% vaccination rate many experts believe will be necessary to achieve herd immunity. Currently, the average rate of fully vaccinated individuals in our 15-county region is around 50%.

TriHealth and our clinical experts have been working with other health systems in the region, and the Ohio Hospital Association (OHA), to establish consistent guidelines that all Ohio hospitals and health systems can adopt to most effectively manage the phased roll back of COVID safety measures over time, made possible by lower infection and higher vaccination rates. As the dust is settling following last week's revised CDC guidance, it is clear that there remains some confusion and uncertainty around how this CDC guidance should be implemented. This is why we will continue to collaborate with the OHA and the region's other health systems to further refine and evolve our approach in response to CDC guidance as vaccination rates climb and new infections fall, all as we work to end this pandemic.

Planned to take effect on June 2, the following is a high-level summary of the direction we are headed and what you can expect as we initiate this first phase of our rollback based on CDC guidance:

Patient Care Settings*
- Masks will continue to be required for all individuals, including visitors and patients – whether vaccinated or not in all direct patient care areas.
- Masks and eyewear will continue to be required for those treating COVID patients in isolation or performing aerosolizing procedures.

*Patient care settings are defined as any location that serves patients (including outpatients and children) who may be seen, evaluated, treated, or are waiting to be seen. These areas include: all hospitals, clinics, diagnostic centers, ambulatory service centers, home care, hospice, physician offices, and rehabilitation departments. See rules below for non-direct patient care areas within clinical settings.

Non-Patient Care Settings**
- Masks will be **optional** for **fully vaccinated** individuals.
- Masks will still be **required** for those **not vaccinated**, and we will rely on the honor system to implement.

**Non-patient care settings include breakrooms, meeting rooms and cafeterias within patient care settings, as well as all non-clinical facilities, such as Norwood, Baldwin, Data Center, etc.

Large Meetings/Events and Other Gatherings
- Our infectious disease and infection prevention experts are now evaluating changes to COVID precautions for large in-person events (including guidance for masking, maximum attendees, and social distancing) in light of last week's CDC announcement and we will communicate final decisions over the next few weeks.

As a reminder, until June 2, all current COVID safety practices – ***including wearing masks at all times in all facilities*** – remains in effect for all individuals. We'll provide more details and further explanation on the finalized changes, including updated Always Behaviors and infection prevention policies, next week.

THANK YOU for all of your hard work and shared sacrifices that helped to bring about this encouraging new milestone on our COVID journey!! I recognize that with this new CDC guidance, we are all ready to "lose the mask" entirely, but we are not quite there yet, and I ask for your continued patience and support to ensure the health and safety of all those we serve remains our top priority.

In the meantime, let's continue to build on this positive momentum by doing everything we can to achieve our "Get Out the Vax" regional goal of **80% vaccinated by July 4**! And the best way to do this is to remain a strong ambassador for vaccine awareness, safety, and informed decision making within your communities and families! Visit testandprotectcincy.com to learn more.