



President's Office

Letters to the UMB Community

A Message from Drs. Jarrell & Suntha: Have a Safe and Happy Thanksgiving -- Travel and Testing Guidance

November 18, 2021

Dear UMB Community,

As we approach the holiday season, we continue to be grateful for the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) and University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) community and all the ways you have showed up for each other, our patients, and the communities we serve over the past two years. Your commitment to helping end the pandemic — which includes getting the COVID-19 vaccine — is why we are able to celebrate with friends and family this year.

We know many of you are looking forward to being with your loved ones over the holidays, and we hope you'll get some much-needed quality time with them. To those who will spend the upcoming holidays caring for patients and fulfilling our mission, we are incredibly grateful and know that our patients and their family members feel the same — perhaps now more than ever.

For those who are traveling and/or gathering with others, we ask that you please review the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's \(CDC\) updated holiday guidance](#) for tips about how to stay safe while celebrating, as well as special considerations for those who remain unvaccinated or have a weakened immune system.

If you are traveling, be sure to also refer to the [CDC's updated travel guidance](#) and, specifically, its [travel recommendations by destination](#) to check current positivity rates and testing/vaccination guidelines for specific locations.

We continue to review federal, state, and local guidelines around all aspects of the pandemic and have also asked some of our own experts to weigh in on [how to keep ourselves and our families safe](#) as we expand our “pods” and celebrate with others. While we encourage you to review the above guidance in full, here are the most important things to keep in mind:

1. **Being fully vaccinated and gathering with those who are fully vaccinated is the most effective way to stay safe and prevent further spread of COVID-19.** This means having both doses of a two-dose vaccine, one dose of a single-dose vaccine, and a booster, if you are eligible. Remember, children ages 5-11 are now also eligible for vaccination. If you haven't already made an appointment for your child to be vaccinated, [click here to make one today](#).

2. **We encourage individuals who travel to consider getting tested before leaving, and after returning, per the [UMMS Tiered Approach to Infection Prevention Practice and Presence at the Workplace](#) and CDC guidance.** Individuals hosting friends or family (particularly vulnerable individuals such as elderly or unvaccinated children) should ask their guests to get tested. Home rapid antigen tests are fast and convenient but may be hard to find, and getting results from PCR tests can take a couple of days, so be sure to plan ahead. Please note: Testing for non-essential travel is not available through UMMS or UMB. [Click here to find a testing location.](#)
3. **When traveling with others by plane, bus, or train, be sure to wear a high-grade mask such as a KN95 or N95.**
4. **If anyone in your family is sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, refrain from traveling or gathering with others.**

Thank you, in advance, for continuing to set a good example by promoting good infection prevention practices during this time. We hope that — no matter what your plans are — you're able to take some time to celebrate the holidays and that you stay healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS

President

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