



UMB RECOVERY TASK FORCE

Dec. 3, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

As we head into our second winter with COVID-19, we need to continue our efforts to remain healthy — both physically and mentally. Unfortunately, the Delta variant continues to circulate at high levels throughout the country and in Maryland, causing increasing hospitalizations, severe illness, and deaths. Maintaining our vigilance to public health measures so that we all have a wonderful holiday season is especially important right now.

The World Health Organization recently declared the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 a new variant of concern. This variant initially was detected in South Africa and has since been identified in several other countries worldwide, including most recently in the United States. There are many questions about Omicron, including transmissibility and disease severity. We are monitoring the evolving data closely and will share any relevant details as soon as we have them.

Thanks to the collective efforts of our team members over the last 20 months, the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) and the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) maintain optimal readiness for this and any new variant. Our strategies continue to focus on maintaining safe educational and work environments, providing optimal care, and ensuring a coordinated academic, system-based response.

Each of us plays a critical role in slowing the spread of current and emerging COVID-19 variants — to each other, our patients, and our loved ones. Here are some vital steps we all can and should take immediately:

- **Get Your COVID-19 Booster**

Vaccination is the most powerful tool we have to protect against COVID-19 and, ultimately, save lives. COVID-19 booster shots, which provide a critical layer of protection against illness from the virus, are widely available and recommended

for all adults. **We strongly encourage all eligible team members** to make a [*booster appointment today*](#). Please also continue to serve as a resource for your loved ones and communities and emphasize the importance of vaccination for those who are not yet protected.

- **Wear a High-Grade Mask in All Shared Indoor Spaces**

Even if you are vaccinated and as a result you remain healthy, you can still spread the virus to others. [*Adherence to mask wearing*](#) is essential to mitigate risk to you and those around you. As a reminder, all team members — faculty, staff, and students — regardless of vaccination status, must wear a mask at all times in shared indoor spaces, including in team member-only settings such as meeting and break rooms. Specifically, we strongly advise using higher-grade masks such as a KN95 or N95 respirator, both inside and outside the workplace, and require using a KN95 mask or N95 respirator for any patient contact. [*Read more*](#) about protection measures to keep yourself and others safe in the workplace and the community.

- **Get Tested**

If you have an exposure or are feeling sick, testing is critical to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Learn more about [*UMB's testing guidelines*](#) and the appropriate steps to take to keep yourself and others safe, or [*click here to find a testing location near you*](#).

If you have questions or need clarification, please utilize the [*UMB COVID-19 Hotline*](#) or call 800-701-9863.

As we navigate the ever-changing landscape of the pandemic, we are grateful for your dedication to our patients, students, and each other. Your commitment, in these most challenging times, is the reason UMB and UMMS continue to be trusted voices and leaders in our state's COVID-19 response.

Undoubtedly, we are better prepared because of you, and we will get through this together.

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Please visit [*umaryland.edu/coronavirus*](https://umaryland.edu/coronavirus) for more information about UMB's COVID-19 policies and recovery.

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