

## Smilow Update: August 21, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

### Vaccinations and Infection Prevention

As of today, 89% of Smilow providers and staff have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. As key deadlines approach, we ask that you actively reach out to the unvaccinated employees in your areas to offer support and answer questions.

- YNHHS has provided a **toolkit** to support discussing the vaccine with employees.
- The deadline for medical staff to either provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination at a non YNHHS site, or to get vaccinated as a part of the vaccination fairs being held at all hospital sites is August 31. Proof of vaccination—a photo or scan of your vaccination card—can be submitted to [vaccineinfo@ynhh.org](mailto:vaccineinfo@ynhh.org)
- As a reminder, YNHHS and Yale University require that approved face masks must be worn at all times when around others in indoor settings, regardless of vaccination status.
- The YNHHS Infection Prevention team has developed an algorithm to guide indoor and outdoor gatherings and meetings. The goal is to consciously consider if a meeting is truly necessary, and if so, schedule it via Zoom rather than in person. The algorithm is available [here](#).

### Visitation Updates

As of August 9, Smilow Cancer Hospital and all delivery network inpatient units have moved to one visitor per day, no swapping.

### Additional COVID Vaccine Dose

- Smilow Cancer Hospital is in support of patients who meet the criteria listed by the CDC receiving a 3rd dose of vaccine (as long as they did not experience anaphylaxis or other serious complication with prior doses). Criteria for scheduling includes:
  - Receiving treatment for a blood cancer (for example, leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma, myelodysplastic syndrome)
  - Receiving treatment for a solid tumor with chemotherapy or immunotherapy (currently or within the last six months)
  - Received a stem cell transplant within the last two years or requiring immune-suppressing medication
  - Received a solid organ transplant (such as a kidney or liver transplant) and are taking immune-suppressing medication
  - Moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency (such as DiGeorge or Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome)
  - Advanced or untreated HIV disease

- Taking high-dose corticosteroids (equal to at least 20 mg of prednisone daily) or any of the other medications **on this list** that suppress the immune system.
- Self-scheduling for additional dose appointments is now open **<https://covidvaccine.ynhh.org/>**. If you or patients have questions about the vaccine or need help scheduling vaccination, please call 1-833-ASK-YNHH (275-9644) for assistance.
- Additional information is available through a **CDC slide deck** highlighting “Clinical Considerations for Use of an Additional mRNA COVID-19 Vaccine Dose After a Primary mRNA COVID-19 Vaccine Series for Immunocompromised People.”
- Patients may also receive the third vaccine at sites outside the Yale system if available (at commercial pharmacies for example).
- Patients who are on treatment with prednisone or other medicines for graft versus host disease should review the timing of the 3rd vaccination with their transplant provider.
- Talking points and additional information for providers are available **online**.
- FAQ information for patients can be found **online** and will be updated as scheduling becomes available through YNHH.

### **COVID-specific Research Guidance for Human Subjects and/or Off-Campus Research and Fieldwork**

Effective August 18th, safety protocol review related to conducting human subjects research during a pandemic transferred from the Human Subjects Research Review Committee to the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP), which administers Yale’s Institutional Review Boards (IRBs). This change supports Yale’s research and public health and safety goals while the community continues to navigate the challenges of COVID-19. All human subject research will be reviewed by the HRPP prior to review by the IRB.

- Researchers engaged in human subjects research will be required to complete a **supplement** to their existing or new human subjects protocol(s), and review of these supplements will be undertaken by members of the Yale Human Research Protection Program.
- Researchers planning to conduct research at any off-campus locations should complete a newly developed educational **Travel Self-Assessment** before traveling or initiating off-campus research.
- Researchers planning off-campus research that is covered by a human subjects protocol should take both of the above steps.
- Researchers whose plans have already been approved through the EHS Integrator process or who have been exempted from review via an earlier self-assessment tool do not need to re-submit their plans.
- More information is available through the **Research at Yale** site. Please reach out to **Roy S. Herbst, MD, PhD**, Acting Associate Cancer Center Director for Clinical Sciences, or **Alyssa Gateman, MPH, CCRP**, Interim Administrative Director, Clinical Trials Office, with specific questions or concerns.

### **Chaperone Policy and Training**

Yale New Haven Health and Yale Medicine are approaching the implementation phase of the policy “Use of Chaperones for Examinations, Treatments, and Procedures.” This new policy on the use of medical chaperones aims to provide a safe, comfortable environment for patients while also enhancing the provider experience. The policy and supportive documents are available:

- At **YNHHS** on the Intranet under “**Resources**,” in the Medical Staff Portal
- At **YM**

A medical chaperone is a person who acts as a witness for a patient and a health professional during a medical examination, treatment, or procedure. With the policy's rollout, medical chaperones will be required during sensitive examination, treatment, or procedure as noted in the policies of the respective entities. Medical chaperones will also be available during any other examination, treatment, or procedure at the patient's request. Additionally, any member of the care team may request the presence of a chaperone during any examination, treatment, or procedure.

An electronic learning module was developed for all employees and members of the medical staff in clinical areas. You are asked to complete this module by October 1, 2021.

- If you are primarily employed by Yale School of Medicine, please access [your TMS platform](#). If the module is not in your assignment list, search for "Chaperone" and register for the course.
- If you are primarily employed by Yale New Haven Health, please access your LMS profile in Infor. If the module is not in your assignment list, search for "Chaperone" and register for the course.

### COVID Testing

While vaccination remains the most essential tool to reduce the severity of COVID-19 and lowers the risk of transmission, data suggests that some vaccinated individuals may still be able to transmit the Delta variant. We require that approved face masks must be worn at all times when around others in indoor settings, regardless of vaccination status.

A reminder to all employees and medical staff, even those who are fully vaccinated, to stay home from work if you have any COVID-19 symptoms. We must do all we can to prevent exposures to our patients and our coworkers. Self-scheduling for COVID-19 testing can be done online through the [YNHHS](#) or [Yale University](#).

### Smilow Star!

**Fae Willett, RN**, retired earlier this week after working for 30 years as an Oncology Nurse in the Yale New Haven Health System. Fae is a warrior who survived breast cancer four times and never let her diagnoses or treatment get her down. She is always positive! She continued to be an inspiration to her patients and colleagues and she shared personal experiences with new and active patients, which eased their fears.

Fae's bubbly personality relaxed our patients. She belongs to a women's chorus, Harmony on the Sound, and always brought music to the treatment area where her patients would sing along with her. Fae spearheaded the annual Making Strides Against Breast Cancer team from Bridgeport Hospital and our Smilow Cancer Hospital Care Centers in Trumbull and Fairfield, along with our families and patients. The team in Trumbull and Fairfield will miss Fae—she



was a joy to work with and loved by all, always putting our patients first and going above and beyond to accommodate them, even if it meant staying beyond her scheduled time.

**Best regards,**

**Nita Ahuja, MD, MBA, FACS**

Interim Director, Yale Cancer Center  
Interim Physician-in-Chief, Smilow Cancer Hospital

**Lori C. Pickens, MHA**

Senior Vice President and Executive Director  
Smilow Cancer Hospital

**Kevin G. Billingsley, MD, MBA**

Chief Medical Officer  
Smilow Cancer Hospital

**Kim Slusser, MSN, RN, CHPN, NEA-BC**

Vice President for Patient Services  
Smilow Cancer Hospital

Yale Cancer Center | [www.yalecancercenter.org](http://www.yalecancercenter.org)

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