

# WAKE FOREST SCHOOL OF MEDICINE COVID-19 RESPONSE: GUIDE FOR A SAFE RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

Updated June 17, 2020: New/Updated Text Highlighted in Berry Color Throughout

## Overall Goals

- Achieve excellence in research while continuing to protect the health and safety of our employees, students, patients, and community.
- Appreciate the heterogeneity of our research teams and empower individual departments/centers/institutes to develop specific operational plans that meet these expectations/standards and address their unique needs.
- Encourage continued social distancing, calling on departments/centers/institutes to limit on-site activity to only that which is necessary, and protect the portion of our workforce that must be on campus to fulfill job responsibilities.
- Identify and implement creative COVID-19 research strategies, encouraging new research in this field.

## Basic/Animal Research

- **Wake Forest School of Medicine basic and animal research programs re-started on-site research on June 1, 2020. The following conditions and standards will remain in place until further notice.**
- **Conditions that must be maintained to engage in research:**
  - No current Shelter in Place Orders (State & Local).
  - Continued guidance from clinical and public health experts that we are not putting our employees, students, patients, and/or community at undue risk through the conduct of research.
  - Adequate supplies of PPE for clinical, research, and education enterprises.
  - COVID-19 evaluation processes in place for employees and research participants.
  - Ability to implement and maintain strategies to reduce potential COVID-19 transmission in the workplace.
- **Personnel Standards:**
  - All research faculty and staff must adhere to the mask wearing standards set forth by the institution. With this, masks must be worn at all times while on campus with the exception of breaks that allow for social distancing or instances when an individual is working alone in an office or laboratory. In any shared office, cubicle, or laboratory space, masks must be worn at all times.
  - All research faculty and staff are required to stay home if they are sick with no exceptions. In addition, we ask that all faculty and staff self-administer the following screening questions daily:
    - Have you had a fever, cough, or shortness of breath in the last 7 days?
    - Have you had vomiting or diarrhea in the last 7 days?
    - Have you had contact with someone who was diagnosed to have COVID-19?
  - If any faculty or staff answer positively to these questions or report illness, refer them to Employee Health to determine next steps. In addition, if a COVID-19 positive individual is known to have entered or worked in the office or lab, notify Employee Health. With this notification:
    - The area may have to be temporarily closed for cleaning and disinfection.
    - **Employee Health and Infection Prevention will work together to identify and document all employees who test positive for COVID-19. Once confirmed, they will work together to trace back all contacts that occurred in the prior 48-hour period who may be at risk of exposure (within 6 ft for greater than 15 minutes or unmasked). Notifications are sent out from Infection Prevention to those potentially exposed and/or leaders asking for specific information. This data is shared with Employee Health to review and provide further instruction for impacted staff.**

- Limit the number of faculty and staff on-site to the absolute minimum possible, identifying strategies for how essential activities can be done with a smaller staff footprint at any one time.
    - Can rooms be scheduled for use?
    - Can experiments be scheduled to achieve less density in specific rooms?
    - Can you stagger work schedules and assignments on shared equipment?
    - Can one employee use equipment in the morning and another in the afternoon?
    - Can you stop all vendor representative visits unless there are extreme circumstances that justify the visit?
  - Identify activities that can be performed with reduced face-to-face interaction:
    - Limit the number of meetings and when possible, use remote collaboration tools (phone, video), even for those on site and in the same office/building.
    - If you must meet in person, limit attendance in conference rooms to a maximum of 50% occupancy.
    - Encourage employees to use phones and email to ask each other routine questions or obtain service versus walking around the lab in person.
  - Do not permit children or volunteers to be on site at any time.
- **Laboratory Standards:**
    - Environmental Services and our contracted cleaning companies have initiated protocols to increase cleaning standards across all research buildings with a particular focus on increased cleaning frequency of high touch areas in common spaces.
    - With the above said, research teams must create and/or update Standard Operating Procedures, putting in extra measures to ensure a clean and appropriate environment for lab staff. Please note that the heterogeneity of our research programs will require a heterogenous response. These items cannot be dictated centrally, so please carefully consider the needs of your teams, including re-evaluation of guidelines for cleaning, PPE use, and handwashing. In addition, please provide guidance to your teams regarding areas and activities that are appropriate for standard issue cloth masks as compared to areas or activities requiring a higher level of PPE (surgical masks, N95 masks, etc.).
    - Identify high-touch locations and equipment specific to each lab. Locations and equipment with a high frequency of handling and contact represent a higher probability of viral loading in the work area and should be disinfected on a routine basis.
    - Be vigilant with supplies coming into laboratories. Without knowing where these items originated or who has handled them, it is best practice to disinfect everything that is received.
    - Ensure the laboratory has appropriate supplies of PPE for staff to carry out research and to protect themselves from other researchers. Additional PPE to consider are gloves and face masks. Many of these items are on back order and should be ordered in accordance with institutional guidance.
    - Clean and disinfect Shared Scientific Instruments
      - Identify shared scientific instruments that will need to be cleaned with a specific disinfectant so as not to damage the equipment.
      - Identify any shared scientific instruments that must be used by multiple researchers and develop a coordinated plan to clean and disinfect.
    - Consider locking laboratory and procedure room doors to prevent accidental intrusion.
  - **Meeting, Conference Room, & Common Space Standards**
    - Departments/Centers/Institutes should use remote collaboration tools/resources (WebEx, Conference Calls, etc.) as the primary meeting option. In-person meetings should be exceedingly rare and well justified (e.g. requiring staff without individual workstations).
    - If in-person meetings are absolutely required:
      - Confirm total number of in-person attendees
      - No in-person meeting will include more than 10 people
      - Choose meeting space that can accommodate meeting size, ensuring that room use does not exceed 50% capacity.
      - Leave at least one empty seat between each person in attendance with a preference of at least 6 feet.

- Wear masks at all times.
    - Participants must “wash-in and out of the room” using hand sanitizer and wash hands with soap and water as soon as possible.
  - Add “Max Capacity” signs to all conference rooms and common spaces
  - While caution is advised in their use, institutional leadership suggests that shared resources such as refrigerators, microwaves, coffee machines, water fountains, toasters, etc., remain available for use. Individuals using these items are required to wipe them down before and after every use.
  - It is recommended that community-use office supplies such as staplers, tape dispensers, staple removers, etc. be removed from community spaces to the extent possible.
  - No shared/community food at any time.
  - It is suggested that groups remove or block seating/tables as necessary and position those remaining to discourage gathering and encourage social distancing.
  - It is suggested that adherence will be improved with the addition of reminder signs and check lists in common areas regarding masking, 6-foot rule, hygiene, disinfection, etc.
  - Establish shared cleaning schedules among staff to ensure that common areas receive regular disinfection throughout the day.
- **Hygiene Standards**
    - Encourage all staff to wash hands at least once per hour. While not required, it is important to note that one study found that a top-down program of hand washing five times per day cut medical visits for respiratory infections by 45%. Research on the 2002 SARS coronavirus outbreak found that washing hands more than ten times per day reduced infection rate by even more.
    - Each person will be responsible for disinfecting their own workspaces with provided wipes/sanitizers.

## Clinical Research

- **Wake Forest School of Medicine clinical research programs re-started on-site research on June 1, 2020. The following conditions and standards will remain in place until further notice.**
- **Conditions that must be met and/or maintained to engage in research:**
  - No current Shelter in Place Orders (State & Local).
  - Continued guidance from experts in the field that we are not putting our employees, students, patients, and/or community at undue risk through the conduct of research.
  - Adequate supplies of PPE for clinical, research, and education enterprises.
  - COVID-19 evaluation processes in place for employees and research participants.
  - Ability to implement and maintain strategies to reduce potential COVID-19 transmission in the workplace.
- **Personnel Standards:**
  - All research faculty and staff must adhere to the mask wearing standards set forth by the institution. With this, masks must be worn at all times while on campus with the exception of breaks that allow for social distancing or instances when an individual is working alone in an office. In any shared environment, masks must be worn at all times.
  - All research faculty and staff are required to stay home if they are sick with no exceptions. In addition, we ask that all faculty and staff self-administer the following screening questions daily:
    - Have you had a fever, cough, or shortness of breath in the last 7 days?
    - Have you had vomiting or diarrhea in the last 7 days?
    - Have you had contact with someone who was diagnosed to have COVID-19?
  - If any faculty or staff answer positively to these questions or report illness, refer them to Employee Health to determine next steps. In addition, if a COVID-19 positive individual is known to have entered or worked in your area, notify Employee Health. With this notification:
    - The area may have to be temporarily closed for cleaning and disinfection.
    - **Employee Health and Infection Prevention will work together to identify and document all employees who test positive for COVID-19. Once confirmed, they will work together to trace back all contacts that occurred in the prior 48-hour period who may be at risk of exposure (within 6 ft for greater than 15 minutes or unmasked). Notifications are sent out from Infection Prevention to those potentially exposed and/or leaders asking for specific information. This data is shared with Employee Health to review and provide further instruction for impacted staff.**
  - Limit the number of staff on-site to the absolute minimum possible, identifying strategies for how essential activities can be done with a smaller staff footprint at any one time.
  - Identify activities that can be performed with reduced face-to-face interaction:
    - Limit the number of meetings and when possible, use remote collaboration tools (phone, video), even for those on site and in the same office/building.
    - If you must meet in person, limit attendance in conference rooms to a maximum of 50% occupancy.
    - Encourage employees to use phones and email to ask each other routine questions or obtain service versus in-person discussions.
  - Do not permit children or volunteers to be on site at any time.
- **Research Site Standards:**
  - Environmental Services and our contracted cleaning companies have initiated protocols to increase cleaning standards across all research buildings with a particular focus on increased cleaning frequency of high touch areas in common spaces.
  - With the above said, research teams must create and/or update Standard Operating Procedures, putting in extra measures to ensure a clean and appropriate environment for staff. Please note that the heterogeneity of our research programs will require a heterogenous response. These items cannot be dictated centrally, so please carefully consider the needs of your teams, including re-evaluation of guidelines for cleaning, PPE use, and handwashing. In

addition, please provide guidance to your teams regarding areas and activities that are appropriate for standard issue cloth masks as compared to areas or activities requiring a higher level of PPE (surgical masks, N95 masks, etc.).

- Identify high-touch locations and equipment specific to environment. Locations and equipment with a high frequency of handling and contact represent a higher probability of viral loading in the work area and should be disinfected on a routine basis.
- Be vigilant with supplies coming into research areas. Without knowing where these items originated or who has handled them, it is best practice to disinfect everything that is received.

- **Pre-Visit Screening Standards:**

- Administer screening questions via phone or video 24 hours in advance of all on-site visits.
- Ask participants:
  - Have you had a fever, cough, or shortness of breath in the last 7 days?
  - Have you had vomiting or diarrhea in the last 7 days?
  - Have you had contact with someone who was diagnosed to have COVID-19?
- If the participant responds negatively to all questions, they may proceed with scheduled visit. If they report an issue, refer them to their primary care physician and/or to one of our respiratory assessment clinics. They can call 336-713-7775 and they will receive a phone visit to help determine if they need to be seen or evaluated for COVID-19.

- **On-Site Visit Standards:**

- Mask all participants prior to entering clinical research environments.
- Take each participant's temperature upon entry into clinical research environments. If the participant is found to have a temperature of 100 degrees or greater, discontinue the visit and refer them to their primary care physician and/or to one of our respiratory assessment clinics. They can call 336-713-7775 and they will receive a phone visit to help determine if they need to be seen or evaluated for COVID-19.
- Upon completion of the temperature check, prior to research visit start, administer the following screening questions:
  - Have you had a fever, cough, or shortness of breath in the last 7 days?
  - Have you had vomiting or diarrhea in the last 7 days?
  - Have you had contact with someone who was diagnosed to have COVID-19?
- If the participant responds negatively to all questions, they may proceed with scheduled visit. If they report an issue, refer them to their primary care physician and/or to one of our respiratory assessment clinics. They can call 336-713-7775 and they will receive a phone visit to help determine if they need to be seen or evaluated for COVID-19.
- Carefully adhere to all cleaning, PPE, and handwashing protocols to protect both the research staff and our participants. Examples include:
  - Wipe down tables, chairs, beds, writing utensils, keyboards, tablets, equipment, and other surfaces prior to the participants arrival.
  - Use hand sanitizer at the start of every visit.
  - At the end of every visit, wipe everything down again wearing gloves and wash hands.

- **Meeting, Conference Room, & Common Space Standards**

- Departments/Centers/Institutes should use remote collaboration tools/resources (WebEx, Conference Calls, etc.) as the primary meeting option. In-person meetings should be exceedingly rare and well justified (e.g. requiring staff without individual workstations).
- If in-person meetings are absolutely required:
  - Confirm total number of in-person attendees
  - No in-person meeting will include more than 10 people
  - Choose meeting space that can accommodate meeting size, ensuring that room use does not exceed 50% capacity.
  - Leave at least one empty seat between each person in attendance with a preference of at least 6 feet.
  - Wear masks at all times.

- Participants must “wash-in and out of the room” using hand sanitizer and wash hands with soap and water as soon as possible.
  - Add “Max Capacity” signs to all conference rooms and common spaces
  - While caution is advised in their use, institutional leadership suggests that shared resources such as refrigerators, microwaves, coffee machines, water fountains, toasters, etc., remain available for use. Individuals using these items are required to wipe them down before and after every use.
  - It is recommended that community-use office supplies such as staplers, tape dispensers, staple removers, etc. be removed from community spaces to the extent possible.
  - No shared/community food at any time.
  - It is suggested that groups remove or block seating/tables as necessary and position those remaining to discourage gathering and encourage social distancing.
  - It is suggested that adherence will be improved with the addition of reminder signs and check lists in common areas regarding masking, 6-foot rule, hygiene, disinfection, etc.
  - Establish shared cleaning schedules among staff to ensure that common areas receive regular disinfection throughout the day.
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- **Hygiene Standards**
    - Encourage all staff to wash hands at least once per hour. While not required, it is important to note that one study found that a top-down program of hand washing five times per day cut medical visits for respiratory infections by 45%. Research on the 2002 SARS coronavirus outbreak found that washing hands more than ten times per day reduced infection rate by even more.
    - Each person will be responsible for disinfecting their own workspaces with provided wipes/sanitizers.

## Other Research Faculty & Staff

- **Other research faculty and staff, such as non-patient facing investigators/staff, non-lab-based investigators/staff, and research administration personnel are permitted to re-start on-site activity to the extent necessary on July 1, 2020.**
- **Remote Work Standards:**
  - Our response to COVID-19 has taught us that, while these roles are essential to our function and contribute significantly to our research success, many of them can be equally (or more) effective while working remotely. With this in mind, we ask that all research groups strongly consider which activities require an on-site presence and which can be conducted remotely. In this analysis, we ask that you please promote social distancing by limiting the need for these individuals to be on campus to the extent possible. While we have no recommended minimum on-site percentage, we do recommend that, collectively, individuals in this category do not exceed 50% time on-campus.
  - All departments/centers/institutes must adhere to institutional policies and procedures while developing remote work strategies. In addition, while not an exhaustive list, we recommend consideration of the following:
    - **Eligibility:** All faculty and staff determinations should be based on job responsibilities and adhere to institutional and departmental expectations.
    - **Compliance:** Individuals who work remotely must comply with all WFBMC policies and procedures, including adequately safeguarding and securing any restricted or confidential information (including PHI) with which they work in accordance with applicable law as well as policies and procedures.
    - **Work Schedule:** Employees who work remotely are expected to have regularly scheduled and approved work hours (determined by department/center/institute), to be fully accessible during those hours, and to attend meetings (virtual) as may be required.
    - **Environment:** Individuals working remotely should take responsibility for ensuring an ergonomically appropriate place to work.
    - **Services & Equipment:** An individual's use of equipment and resources provided by WFSM should be limited to the purpose of remote work and is not intended for personal use.
    - **Duration:** Remote work arrangements may be discontinued at any time linked to the current status of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **On-Site Standards**
  - All research faculty and staff must adhere to the mask wearing standards set forth by the institution. With this, masks must be worn at all times while on campus with the exception of breaks that allow for social distancing or instances when an individual is working alone in an office. In any shared office, cubicle, or other community space, masks must be worn at all times.
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specific information. This data is shared with Employee Health to review and provide further instruction for impacted staff.

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  - Wear masks at all times.
  - Participants must “wash-in and out of the room” using hand sanitizer and wash hands with soap and water as soon as possible.
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- It is recommended that community-use office supplies such as staplers, tape dispensers, staple removers, etc. be removed from community spaces to the extent possible.
- No shared/community food at any time.
- It is suggested that groups remove or block seating/tables as necessary and position those remaining to discourage gathering and encourage social distancing.
- It is suggested that adherence will be improved with the addition of reminder signs and check lists in common areas regarding masking, 6-foot rule, hygiene, disinfection, etc.
- Establish shared cleaning schedules among staff to ensure that common areas receive regular disinfection throughout the day.

- **Hygiene Standards**

- Encourage all staff to wash hands at least once per hour. While not required, it is important to note that one study found that a top-down program of hand washing five times per day cut medical visits for respiratory infections by 45%. Research on the 2002 SARS coronavirus outbreak found that washing hands more than ten times per day reduced infection rate by even more.
- Each person will be responsible for disinfecting their own workspaces with provided wipes/sanitizers.