

**I've been reading a lot about new variants of COVID. Is MPH changing its protocols?**

Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time. These new variants do seem to spread more easily and quickly than others, which could lead to more cases of COVID-19. We continue to carefully monitor this situation and will make necessary protocol changes, if needed.

**There have been some recent news stories about “double masking.” What is that all about?**

Every day, we learn more about how to control the spread of the virus. New data indicates that wearing a surgical mask under a cloth mask can provide almost twice the protection as just a single cloth mask. At this time, with physical distancing, testing, and other protective procedures in place at MPH, we will continue to require the use of one cloth, fitted mask, though you are welcome to double mask if you prefer.

**Many MPH teachers and staff members have been vaccinated; do they still need to wear masks?**

Yes. Everyone, whether vaccinated or not, still needs to wear a mask and adhere to safety protocols. We are thrilled that most of our staff have either started or completed the vaccination process. It is important to understand, however, that the purpose of the vaccination is to prevent significant illness from the COVID-19 virus. Scientists are hopeful that the vaccine will also prevent the spread of the virus, but there is not enough data to confirm or deny this yet. We will all wear masks until further notice.

**Once I am vaccinated, will I still need to be tested as part of MPH's community-wide testing days?**

Yes. The purpose of testing is to identify asymptomatic spread. As stated above, it is currently thought that you can still be a carrier of the virus even after vaccination. Therefore, staying true to the MPH Social Compact, we will continue to test everyone regardless of vaccination status.

**Positivity cases in Onondaga County have been steadily decreasing in recent weeks. Is MPH relaxing any of its health protocols in response to this trend?**

No. Although we are glad to see fewer positive cases, we are not relaxing any of our health protocols. Maintaining these protocols has worked exceedingly well so far, keeping our community healthy and allowing our students to continue their education largely uninterrupted during the pandemic. We will stay disciplined and ask that everyone keep up the good work to safeguard the health and well-being of the whole MPH community. We do look forward to a time when the health protocols that are currently in place will no longer be necessary; however, we have not arrived at the point yet. We will continue to keep our community informed of any and all updates to our existing health protocols.