

**COVID-19 GUIDE VCOM CAMPUS GUIDE  
FOR STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES  
for the  
July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023 Academic Year**

(Notice: This policy is subject to change during the academic year as CDC guidance and/or state guidelines require change)

July 1, 2022, begins the new academic year and the administrative changes to the COVID-19 policies for VCOM students, faculty, and staff. Over the past two years, we have all learned to live under the restrictions of a pandemic. While the health systems have continued to advance the understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic spread, the virus, the vaccines, and the treatment, we have also learned how to continue to live with the virus.

What we know: COVID-19 will persist and is likely becoming endemic. As the virus moves through the population, it will continue to “reinvent” itself by mutation into a number of variant forms. Some variants may be mild for healthy individuals, while others may be more lethal for vulnerable populations. It is too early to predict how the virus will affect the campus this academic year Thankfully the most recent variants have been milder versions which allow most individuals to return to work or class after five days while wearing a mask.

While it is likely COVID-19 will continue disrupting daily life until the world reaches herd immunity, when we reach the endemic status, infections will be at more modest predictable rates and will integrate into the suite of infectious viral diseases that co-exist with us today. COVID-19 and its variants are here to stay just as the infamous 1918 influenza transitioned into circulating viral infections we face today.

With the knowledge that the virus is here to stay, and as recent variants have been much milder, we must determine how best to move forward in the safest manner possible, while also bringing normalcy back to our daily lives.

As we come closer to the endemic stage, we have learned that just as with other vaccine preventable diseases, **vaccination remains the most important precaution** we can take to prevent serious infections and fatalities. Seasonal vaccination, tracking hospitalization rates, and educating the public about current risk will be the most important prevention measures we can utilize. All faculty, students, and staff are required to be vaccinated for COVID-19 annually unless they have submitted a waiver to the COVID-19 Officer and the waiver has been approved by the COVID-19 Committee.

Again, we will see surges in the virus during the next academic year, just as is occurring with the return of students from their summer break. What we have learned is how to adapt and how to prepare for the unexpected. The following guidelines align with the advice promoted by the CDC, our states guidelines, and the most recent evidence-based literature. Where these may not align, the VCOM COVID-19 Committee will make the decisions with an attempt to follow the safest possible measures that are within applicable state and federal laws.

The following guidance is for the prevention of COVID-19 (and variants) infection within the VCOM campuses and is subject to change throughout the year, depending upon the virulence of the variants that evolve.

## **GUIDANCE FOR FACULTY, STUDENTS, AND STAFF ON THE VCOM CAMPUS**

1. **Vaccination:** VCOM requires all faculty, students, and staff to have annual vaccination for COVID-19 (initial series or booster) unless you have a contraindication to vaccination, or you have submitted a request for exemption through your COVID-19 Officer and the exemption has been approved.
  - a. If granted the exemption, you must follow the COVID-19 Committee's requirements set forth for those not vaccinated in the exemption letter.
  - b. Exemption will be granted according to the request and what has been approved within each state as reasons for exemption (as each of our states have different laws regarding vaccination).
  - c. The exemptions are good for a period of one year and **must be renewed each academic year.**
2. **Symptoms of an Illness:**
  - a. Even if vaccinated, if you become ill or have symptoms of a viral infection, do NOT come to campus, and take a COVID-19 test! The rapid antigen test is acceptable and is readily available in locations such as pharmacies and health departments.
  - b. **If you test negative but you are ill with fever and/or other symptoms,** stay home as there are no infections that we wish to bring to a VCOM campus. Notify the appropriate contact on campus, stay home until you do not have fever or other contagious symptoms. (Symptoms of respiratory or gastrointestinal infection with fever are not something to share on campus).
3. **MyHealthTracer.com.** The use of MyHealthTracer.com application is no longer needed on a daily basis. You must, however document if you test positive and when positive for the following 7 to 10 days. This will allow the COVID-19 Officer to track the spread of the virus in each of the inevitable outbreaks that will occur.
4. **If you test positive for COVID-19 here is what to do:**
  - a. Stay at home for at least 5 days or until the significant symptoms resolve (5 to 10 days). These will be considered from your "sick days" for employees and from your 30% allowable absences for students.
  - b. **Notify the appropriate party of your absence due to illness.**  
OMS-1 and OMS-2 Students – the Associate Dean for Student Affairs,

OMS-3 and OMS-4 Students notify the Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs and your Site Coordinator.

Employees notify your supervisor and the Human Resources Director on your campus.

- c. While you are ill with COVID-19, you should stay safe in your home, staying in a separate room from others and using a separate bathroom from others where possible so not to infect family and friends.
- d. After 5 days, if you are no longer feeling ill you may return. You must wear a N95 mask for an additional 5 days when in public.
- e. Report your status on the MyHealthTracer.com application for a full 10 days.
- f. Sanitize the shared surfaces within your home during the time of your illness (where possible) fully and for the additional 5 days on return. Use hand sanitizer often.
- g. Do not travel outside of your community for the full 10 days (CDC recommendation to limit spread).
- h. When you test positive, contact your healthcare provider to discuss your test results, symptoms, and current treatment options. Report your symptoms, including fever, any trouble breathing, any difficulty with staying hydrated, and/or any emergency warning signs to your healthcare provider.

Watch for any these symptoms that are considered as emergency warning signs including:

- i. Trouble breathing
- ii. Chest pain or pressure
- iii. Extreme weakness

Report any severe symptoms to your physician and seek emergency care.

- i. On the 6<sup>th</sup> day after initially testing positive: Even if improving, do a self-check on “how are you feeling?” You may only return to campus IF:
  - i. You have no symptoms, or the majority of symptoms are resolved and
  - ii. No fever (without fever-reducing medications)
  - iii. Some symptoms such as the loss of taste or smell may last weeks, and as single symptoms should not delay return to work or class
- j. You should wear a mask for an additional five days (at home when around other people and when returning to work). Use hand sanitizer often. Use sanitary wipes for surfaces and practice all precautions you would with any flu like illness.
- k. If your symptoms are not improving and you still have fever, continue to stay at home and continue to consult your physician.
- l. If you have been seriously ill (including being hospitalized or requiring intensive care or ventilation support) or are [immunocompromised](#), please talk to your healthcare provider about when to return and when to [end isolation](#).

- m. Be sure to report your illness on the first day you test positive to the COVID-19 Officer on the MyHealthTracer.com application. You will be asked about your activities for the prior 2 to 3 days to observe any patterns of spread. Continue to report your status for the next 10 days.
- n. The COVID-19 Officers will report the status and any outbreaks to administration and when needed to the Committee.
- o. The COVID-19 Officers will maintain a confidential list of those testing positive for the purpose of monitoring, especially should a more virulent strain occur.

### **Additional Guidance to Prevent COVID-19, for Students, Faculty, and Staff**

1. Quarantine is no longer required for **asymptomatic** employees and students after an exposure to COVID-19 infected individuals.
2. However, for employees and/or students who have been an immediate caregiver for someone who is ill with COVID-19:
  - a. Notify your COVID-19 Officer of this direct exposure
  - b. If an employee, notify your supervisor. Your supervisor may ensure you isolate at work and/or if elements of your job can be done at home that you stay home and work for 48 to 72 hours. This will likely be job dependent and if your job can be completed from home without impacting the department or division. Again, this would be for an immediate caregiver only and not simple contact or exposure.
  - c. If you do come to work, wear a mask for the next 5 days until you know you will not be ill or spread the virus.
3. For OMS-1 and OMS-2 students who have been a unprotected prolonged exposure or been a caregiver with significant exposure to someone with COVID-19 but the student is not ill; the student should :
  - a. Document the exposure on the MyHealthTracer.com application
  - b. Use all precautions with hand sanitizer and surface wipes / cleaning
  - c. Wear a mask for 5 days to avoid spreading to others
  - d. If you choose to stay home, the 30% allowable absences from class were established for such reasons,
  - e. If you return after the significant exposure, you should mask for the next five days, use hand sanitizer, and follow other guidelines to prevent the spread of the virus.
4. In general, masks are not routinely required indoors or outdoors, except during periods of high risk or isolation, or as specified below.
  - a. Any individual who wishes to continue to mask, including those who face higher risk from COVID-19, may do so as an option.
  - b. Masking is required for 10 days following contracting the virus.
  - c. Masking is required for 5 days when returning to campus following significant exposure (such as a caregiver) even if you have not become ill.
  - d. Masking may be required during times when COVID-19 outbreaks occur on campus.

- e. Masking is never recommended while the individual is eating, drinking, sleeping, or for children under the age of 2.
5. If a student or employee becomes sick on campus, they should immediately leave the campus.
  - a. If the student or employee is too ill to drive, he or she should ask the COVID-19 Officer to arrange for the student or employee to be picked up or driven home by family or a friend.
  - b. While waiting, wait in an area that allows distance or isolation from others and wear a mask. Use hand sanitizer.
  - c. Alert the COVID-19 Officer as to where you are waiting, so they can arrange for the area to be cleaned.
6. Exposure is still defined as being within 6 feet of a person who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period or having direct contact with respiratory secretions or other bodily fluids from an infected person.
  - a. If you have been exposed, please observe your status for symptoms, and wear a mask for 5 days when on Campus or other areas where you will have close contact with others, in case you have an asymptomatic infection, or an infection is evolving.
7. There may be a time in the upcoming year when the campus community is experiencing an increasing outbreak of COVID-19 on a campus. Depending upon the numbers affected in the spread, VCOM will determine the quarantine and/or period of isolation for the campus using standards for that are appropriate for the infection and spread. These will be announced to the faculty and staff by the Administration and/or the COVID-19 Officers.

**Guidance for Students, Faculty, and Staff who are on Campus and also working in the Clinical Setting, to prevent the spread of COVID-19.**

1. Students, faculty, and staff caring for patients with COVID-19 in a clinical setting should avoid spreading the virus to the campus community.
2. The students, faculty, and staff should first follow the directions of the clinical site while working at the site, including but not limited to masking, vaccination requirements by the site, and quarantine periods required by the site; when determining safety measures and when to return to work at the site.
3. Students, faculty, and staff who work at both the clinical setting and the campus should always wear a mask, use hand sanitizer, and follow other precautions when returning to campus, especially if they have had direct exposure to persons with a COVID-19 infection. This will prevent the spread of COVID-19 virus from the clinical environment to the campus. If the student, faculty, or staff develops symptoms he or she should stay home and test. Depending upon the test results, the student faculty or staff should notify their COVID-19 Officer for further discussion and instruction.
4. **Students working in the Clinical setting in the OMS 3 and OMS 4 years must follow the requirements set forth by the Clinical Site as to vaccination, masking, illness, and quarantine.**