

COVID Advisory Message – Fall 2021

For all Students, Faculty and Staff of Berea College

As we return to in-person operations with the pandemic still very much ongoing in our region, country, and world, we offer the following suggestions to increase the chances that all Bereans will remain safe and to decrease the chances of outbreaks on campus. Please refer to the COVID-19 Policies for Berea College Employees as well as the COVID-19 Policies for Berea College Students for more information.

Caution and Disclaimer

COVID-19 is a dangerous adversary that has already demonstrated adaptability as measures are taken against it. The advice in this document should be helpful if it is broadly heeded, but even if you follow it carefully, there are NO guarantees. The virus WILL be on campus and in the City of Berea because of its prevalence in our area; you COULD contract it and test positive; and it is POSSIBLE that there will be serious cases among members of the campus community. Already there are dramatic increases in the number of positive cases and hospitalizations in central Kentucky, including Madison County.

Sources

Those who have participated in developing this advice document are well informed as to available authoritative guidance from the CDC and the Kentucky Department of Public Health, are well versed in the details of our operations for the Fall 2021 Term. We hope this document will prove useful, but it cannot replace medical advice specific to your own particular health situation. For that, employees are strongly urged to consult with your physician or local medical providers, and students may contact the staff of White House Clinics.

Vaccination

More than 99% of students studying on campus this fall have completed the vaccination process, with the remainder having qualified for medical or religious exemptions through a rigorous approval process. At this writing, the vaccination rate for employees is nearing 90% and still continuing to increase.

Experts say that to achieve herd immunity against the current variant (Delta), an 85% to 95% community vaccination rate is sufficient. We will be operating in this range on campus. This does not mean, however, that no one can or will get sick. There will still be cases imported onto campus from outside our boundaries and other Bereans can be infected from them, primarily through respiratory contact. Herd immunity means that if we have say “N” infected individuals on campus at any given moment, fewer than “N” other Bereans will catch COVID-19 from them; therefore, any outbreak will die down over a couple of cycles. (By contrast, in a fully unvaccinated population, with the infectiousness of the Delta variant, N infected individuals would likely lead to about 4N transmissions and from those, 4N to 16N and so on, which is what exponential growth means.)

In this context, unvaccinated persons are still in significant danger from being in the group that acquires the infection, at least 5 times more likely. Therefore, UNVACCINATED PERSONS

SHOULD TAKE EVERY POSSIBLE PRECAUTION ALL OF THE TIME. A list of suggested precautions specific to the Berea College on-campus experience constitutes Appendix A below.

For unvaccinated persons, becoming infected with COVID-19 can, depending on risk factors and the details of the initial exposure, lead to serious cases and even death. For vaccinated persons, acquiring the infection, though possible, is less likely. If you are vaccinated and do become infected, you are significantly less likely to experience severe complications even if there are risk factors present, such as age, immune deficiency, respiratory disorders, etc. Unfortunately, whether you are vaccinated or not, if you become infected, it is possible for you to transmit the virus to others.

Monitoring and Quarantine Requirements

(For more details relating to testing and quarantine requirements, please see the policy document “Announcement of COVID-19 Policies for Berea College Employees” on the policy web page, <https://www.berea.edu/covid-19/>. The following covers only some of the important point.)

All Berea students and employees are expected to continue monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms each day and self-certify they are symptom free before reporting to class or work, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated.

Prompt testing, when COVID symptoms (see Appendix A for a list of symptoms) are experienced, is vital to reducing the spread of the virus on campus. All Bereans experiencing symptoms, whether vaccinated or not, are expected to immediately report their situation - students to their Area Coordinator in Student Life and employees through the HealthyatWork@Berea.edu email address so that immediate testing can be arranged.

In the case of positive test results, isolation must occur for a minimum of 10 days but until symptom-free and fever-free for 24 hours.

- For employees, sick time or vacation time must be used for quarantine.
- For students a 10-day quarantine will likely entail class absences that will render it very difficult to complete courses. Administrative withdrawal could be necessary in these cases, with the student expected to make arrangements to return home for the remainder of the semester.

Recommended Precautions for the Unvaccinated

Given the highly contagious Delta variant and potentially severe consequences of becoming infected to one’s health, as well as the near certainty of impaired academic progress, unvaccinated persons should do their utmost to avoid situations where contagion is more likely.

1. Masking and as much social distancing as possible is strongly recommended wherever you go, particularly indoors in off-campus locations. Masking is **required** indoors on campus.
2. Off-campus travel and attendance of events off campus should be avoided as much as possible. The vaccination percentage in Madison County is below 50%, and, at this writing, the number of new cases is increasing every week along with the test positivity rate. It is difficult to ensure social distancing when shopping, etc., and many outbreaks

in our county have been traced to family gatherings and indoor mass gathering such as church services.

3. All Bereans are required to wear masks when inside campus buildings. However, in certain indoor settings, like Dining Services, for example, masks cannot be worn while eating. Such settings are correspondingly more hazardous for the unvaccinated. Sodexo can supply re-usable green plastic food boxes to diners, and it is recommended that unvaccinated persons consider not eating in the dining hall, but instead taking their food outside, to their room, or elsewhere.
4. Likewise, certain group activities like travel, athletics (intramural or intercollegiate), artistic ensembles, convocations and other formal in-person events, etc., cannot be rendered safe for the unvaccinated. It is strongly recommended that unvaccinated persons not attend/participate in such events/activities in person.

Appendix A COVID-19 Symptoms

From the CDC website

(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html)

COVID-19 symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Generally, when one has only the symptoms associated with seasonal allergies, one should not consider these to constitute COVID-19 symptoms. The following list of seasonal allergies is generally accepted:

- Itchy, watery eyes
- Postnasal drip
- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Congestion
- Dark under-eye circles
- Hives
- Sore throat
- Ear discomfort/blockage
- Headache

However, if you think you are experiencing seasonal allergies, you should also monitor your temperature regularly and should a fever develop, you must consider the possibility of COVID-19 infection and be tested immediately.

Finally, there are the respiratory symptoms that can occur either in COVID-19 or when seasonal allergies become particularly severe. These have potentially life-threatening consequences and merit immediate treatment by a medical professional.

- Shortness of breath
- Asthma attack (in the most severe cases)

More information regarding COVID-19 can be found here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/index.html>.