

UT Southwestern Medical Center

Wear a Mask and Lead by Example

July 2, 2020

To the UT Southwestern Community:

Yesterday marked the start of the fifth month of having our personal and professional lives upended by COVID-19, which has regrettably hit an alarming inflection point here in Texas. Within the past week, hospitalizations in the DFW area rose by 36 percent – and by 107 percent compared with June 1. Since the numbers are currently projected to climb even higher, as we approach the Fourth of July weekend, I am writing to remind you that each of us has the capacity to effect change and reverse this trajectory. Furthermore, I believe that we have a special obligation to do so, as members of the UT Southwestern community, committed to our mission of promoting health and a healthy society.

As I noted in [my campus briefing yesterday](#), and as reinforced by Gov. Greg Abbott's new [statewide order on masking](#) issued this afternoon, this is a critical time for us to be responsible to ourselves and others. Our collective actions now in observing social distancing, masking, and hand hygiene are essential to changing the course of the pandemic in North Texas. There is a [growing body of research](#) detailing the effectiveness of these actions in stemming the spread of COVID-19.

However, despite the scientific evidence that widespread masking significantly reduces infection risk – and [our policy](#) that everyone on campus is expected to wear a mask (except in very limited specified circumstances) – not everyone is wearing one or wearing one correctly when required. I have witnessed this myself, and I have heard from many of you who want to know what is being done to enforce the masking requirement.

We expect supervisors to ensure that everyone on their team is aware of the masking policy and to emphasize the importance of observing all UT Southwestern policies. As with all institutional policies, employees are expected to comply with the masking policy, and supervisors are expected to hold employees accountable for noncompliance through appropriate disciplinary actions. Additionally, any member of the UT Southwestern community can report compliance concerns by emailing compliance@utsouthwestern.edu or calling the Compliance Hotline at 1-877-507-7319.

Let me also remind you that the precautions we take at UT Southwestern to protect our patients and each other have the additional benefit of safeguarding our own families, friends, and neighbors. It is vitally important that we set an example of observing nonpharmacologic interventions (NPIs) off campus as well as at work so that others will follow our lead, and together we curb the pandemic.

Thank you for your resilience during these extraordinary times and for your commitment to providing the safest possible environment for us to deliver on our missions of education, discovery, and healing.

Best wishes to all for an enjoyable Fourth of July weekend. Stay safe and be well.

Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.
President, UT Southwestern Medical Center