

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Respiratory Virus Policy

The 'tridemic' of infections from the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), flu virus, and COVID-19 virus has put our local hospitals in crisis mode and resulted in delayed patient care and even transport of sick children to Boise, Idaho. In order to promote public health and protect the vulnerable, St. Andrew's seeks to minimize the risk of the transmission of respiratory viruses among St. Andrew's employees, congregants, renters, and visitors, the COVID-19 task force expanded its recommendations to include RSV and the flu.

Most preventive measures (wearing masks, washing hands, etc.) are effective for all three viruses. A vaccine is not available for RSV. The CDC has reported that this year's flu vaccine is a good match to the circulating strains. The preponderance of evidence indicates that the current COVID-19 vaccine substantially reduces the chances of serious illness, death, or long COVID-19, *even in people who have already had COVID-19.*

All three viruses can be transmitted before an infected person displays symptoms of the disease. It is possible that this could happen during a church service or other event. There have been individuals who have developed symptoms of respiratory virus infection shortly after having attended a worship service and may have been infectious when they were in the church. In addition to minimizing infection of the high-risk older and immunocompromised members of our congregation, minimizing infection of children is particularly important. Hospital pediatric wards are overwhelmed with children with serious respiratory disease. A concern is that an asymptomatic parent or grandparent who was infected at a church service will then infect their child or grandchild who might need hospitalization.

Vermont Hills School

- This policy does not apply to Vermont Hills school staff, students, parents, or visitors. Vermont Hills is operating under policies that follow state and county guidelines.
- Individuals not associated with Vermont Hills school should not enter rooms used by the school without explicit prior approval by Vermont Hills staff during school hours or church staff when the school is not open.

Precautions for everyone

Vaccination for flu and COVID-19 is strongly encouraged for everyone. As noted above, both vaccines are effective in reducing the risk of serious disease, even if you have previously had these diseases.

Face coverings are strongly encouraged for everyone entering the building to reduce the transmission of the flu, RSV, and COVID-19. Acceptable face coverings/masks are N95, KN95, KF94, or both a cloth mask and a surgical mask, not single cloth masks, plastic face shields, bandanas, neck gaiters, or other thin covering. Masks must completely cover both nose and mouth. Individuals should bring their own face coverings. A limited number will be available if needed.

Hand sanitizer will be located at all entrances, and all who enter should sanitize their hands upon entry. This is particularly important for the flu and RSV.

Please respect desires of individuals for social distancing.

Occupants may only use the narthex restrooms when Vermont Hills Preschool is in session. At other times, the restrooms closest to the meeting room should be used.

Precautions for persons with known or at higher risk of respiratory virus exposure or transmission

Anyone with any of the following symptoms should not enter the building until the symptoms resolve, and the relevant protocols are followed. Many of the symptoms are the same for the common cold as well as RSV, flu, and COVID-19.

New or unexpected congestion or runny nose

Sore throat

Fever > 100°F or chills

New cough

Shortness of breath, difficulty breathing

Acute generalized muscle pain

Acute fatigue

Sudden onset of discomfort or illness

Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea

New or unusual headache

New loss of taste or smell

If you have known exposure to RSV or the Flu or have tested negative for COVID-19.

- **Flu:**
 - Most people infected with the flu virus develop symptoms about 2 days after exposure and can become contagious during that time.
 - Your highest levels of virus transmission is during the first 3 to 4 days of sickness.
 - You should isolate until you are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and your other symptoms are improving.
- **RSV**
 - Most people infected with the RSV develop symptoms 4 to 6 days after exposure and may be contagious for a couple of days before showing signs of illness.
 - Your highest levels of virus transmission is during the first 3 to 8 days of sickness.
 - You should isolate until you are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and your other symptoms are improving.

If you have known or at higher risk of COVID-19 exposure

Individuals with known exposure to someone with COVID-19 or have COVID-19 symptoms are advised to follow the precautions below for their circumstance and not enter the building when isolation is indicated per the following CDC recommendations. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>)

- **If you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19**
 - Wear a mask as soon as you find out you were exposed
 - Get tested at least 5 full days after your last exposure, even if asymptomatic
 - Day 0 is the day of your last exposure to someone with COVID-19
 - Day 1 is the first full day after your last exposure
 - If you test negative, continue wearing a mask until day 10
 - If you test positive isolate immediately.
- **If you are sick and suspect that you have COVID-19**
 - Isolate until you have test results
 - **If you test Negative:** you can end your isolation
 - **If you test Positive:** continue isolation
- **When to end isolation**
 - If you had no symptoms, you may end isolation after day 5.
 - If you had symptoms and your symptoms are improving (excluding loss of taste or smell): You may end isolation after day 5 if you are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication).
 - If you had symptoms and your symptoms are not improving continue to isolate until: You are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and your symptoms are improving.
 - If you had symptoms and had Moderate illness (you experienced shortness of breath or had difficulty breathing) you need to isolate through day 10.
 - If you had Severe illness (you were hospitalized) or have a weakened immune system: consult your doctor.
- **After you have ended isolation, when you are feeling better** (no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and symptoms improving) wear your mask through day 10.
or
- With two sequential negative antigen tests 48 hours apart, you may remove your mask before day 10.

Note: If your antigen test results¹ are positive, you may still be infectious. You should continue wearing a mask and wait at least 48 hours before taking another test. Continue taking antigen tests at least 48 hours apart until you have two sequential negative results. This may mean you need to continue wearing a mask and testing beyond day 10.

Follow-up

- This policy is subject to change at any time by the Session or COVID-19/Respiratory Virus Task Force.