FAQ’s on Testing and Flu Vaccinations

1. **Students living with their family will not be able to isolate themselves after testing. Should they, meaning either the student or the family, get a test in this case?**

   When it comes to testing, for students who are coming to campus and who do live with family, you will need to get baseline testing and participate in surveillance testing the same as any other student returning to campus. However, you are not expected to isolate from your own family, and you can go back home to your family in Durham after the test is performed. Student health is not at this time offering testing for family members. However, family members can get testing at Duke University Health System sites, if they're symptomatic, or they can also reach out to some of the testing sites that are available for asymptomatic individuals as well, including commercial pharmacies and other community centers.

2. **What are the COVID testing requirements for graduate and professional students who live in Durham but are not returning to campus?**

   You are not required to get tested unless you plan to come to campus.

3. **If we can't get tested until Monday, August 17th, the day classes start and we have to self-isolate for 48 hours, how do we attend our in-person classes until we get our results?**

   Any in-person classes that are scheduled to begin before the students in that program will have a chance to receive their test results will not happen in person. They're not supposed to happen in person. If your program has not communicated to you that those courses will either be taken online or that your testing window will be put far enough in advance that you can have your test results before you're supposed to arrive, please reach out to GPSC because that is not supposed to be happening.

   We advocated very strongly within the Provost’s office that to make sure that the students would not encounter obstructions to the start of their education this fall due to the testing schedule. So, if this is an issue that has affected you or is affecting your program, please reach out to GPSC. We would love to hear about it, and we'd love to advocate for you to make sure that the situation gets rectified.

4. **Although students who do not come to campus need not get tested, what happens if later this semester I realized I need to come to campus? Will I need to get a test then? If so, how?**

   The current information that we have suggests that students who come to campus later on in the semester will need to get tested when they come to campus, but will not need to get tested, for example, all the way back in August and then isolate yourself until for example, October when
your on campus activity starts. There are certain programs, for example, a few programs in the Fuqua School of Business, a few programs in the school of nursing and a couple of doctoral programs where the standard educational track does not have students arriving on campus until after the testing window has completed. For those students, your program administration should be in contact with you about the specific plan for testing, and those students will have a set of logistical expectations conveyed to them in particular.

5. How do you sign up for a baseline screening test?

You should have by now received information from your program department or school giving you instructions about how to sign up for testing. There is an App signup process where you would sign up for a slot within a designated window that's dependent on your program. Don’t just go and sign up for any random slot, because these time intervals have been structured to accommodate the schedules of the various programs and to get testing finished in a timely manner.

If you have problems with this app, again, reach out to us and we can connect you with some of the folks at student health or with some of the folks in OIT. There have been some issues where some folks have downloaded an app that is meant for Duke Health instead of the one for Duke University. You will not be able to schedule this Duke University testing if you download the Duke Health app. This is a known issue, and we'll include some instructions and information about this in an email that will go out later this week for some help with troubleshooting this, because we know that many students have had this issue. Visit COVID – 19 Testing for more information about the testing appointment app.

Please let GPSC know if you have had issues with the baseline testing process. We’re trying to make sure that all of our students are informed about the process, no matter what program or department they're in, and that the testing process is smooth, unobtrusive, and safe.

6. Why is testing being conducted indoors? Can Duke offer an outdoor option? The only reason I'm coming to campus is to be tested, and I don't feel safe coming inside Penn Pavilion

First, if the only reason you are coming to campus is to be tested, you do not need to be tested. Only students who plan to come to campus this Fall need to be tested. So, if you're not going to come to campus for any other purpose, we recommend that you do not come to campus, because there's no sense in getting this baseline testing if you're not going to become a part of the on-campus community this fall.

In terms of indoor testing, we will have to defer to student health and get more information from them on this. We are still liaising with student health to learn the context behind this decision. GPSC’s understanding is that the current plan for testing and the testing that has already been happening for undergraduate students has utilized effective social distancing. They have been taking careful PPE protocols for the nurses who are administering the tests and for the students who are receiving the tests. There have been significant efforts taken to ensure that there is enough safe distancing. If you have questions about the testing protocol or how things are working at Penn Pavilion or other concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to us as we're engaged in active conversation with student health about this issue.
7. Is the testing window still two weeks? An email went out today noting testing was available August 17th through 20th.

The testing window is still two weeks, but the section within that two weeks that you will be asked to get a test is dependent on your program. If you cannot make the timing offered by your program, they should be working with you to identify an alternative time that you can be tested.

8. Is there an alternative way to schedule for people without the Apple/Google app?

That is the main scheduling platform currently being offered, but we will check with student health to make sure that there's another alternative available. So, if you are a student for whom you're completely unable to use the solutions that have been offered by student health, reach out to us because that's not acceptable. We need to work with student health to make sure that our information systems and our scheduling systems are equally accessible to all students, no matter whether they have access to a particular mobile device.

9. Has Duke considered testing students more frequently? How often should students be expected to get tested? Are we expecting everyone to need to be tested at each of these points or will it be random subsets or some other strategy?

It seems that symptom monitoring and contract tracing will place us behind the ball in attempting to contain a potential outbreak this fall.

Duke is doing what they is termed “surveillance testing”, where there'll be testing on asymptomatic individuals on a pooled basis for all students coming to campus. So, yes, the answer to that question is that Duke has considered and in fact will be testing students more frequently.

We do not know an exact number yet regarding how often students should expect to be tested. The reason for that is that student health is going to make those decisions based off of the modeling data and the public health data that suggests how frequently we should be testing, based on the rate at which the virus is prevalent or not prevalent in the community. So that's a decision that's going to really be up to the experts who are informing student health and we they have a pretty complex plan designed that will address that issue.

You will receive additional communication from your program or from the university specifically, talking about the plan for surveillance testing that'll go on throughout the semester.

Our understanding is that all students who are on campus will be tested at some point for surveillance testing, but they may not all be tested at the exact same time points. So in essence, everyone can expect to be part of a pool, but they may not be a part of a pool at the same time.

Regarding a lot of the logistics about the surveillance testing: you'll receive more information about in the coming weeks from student health, including things like how to collect the swab, how swab yourself, how to get this swab back to student health, what will happen in the follow-up period, how long should you expect to wait for results, etc.
10. Will Duke be releasing statistics on positive cases on campus in the community, potentially broken down by school, etc?

Duke will engage in anonymous, entirely aggregate reporting. The granularity of that reporting will depend on how identifiable the information is, in order to protect the privacy rights of students. So breaking it down to a sub-program or even a program level in some cases is unlikely, because some programs are small enough that that would immediately become identifiable information. At this point if time we don't know the full details of this is something else that we are engaged in active conversation with Student Health and the Provost’s office about.

The Duke University Health System so far has done an excellent job of controlling hospital spread of COVID. There's been very little hospital spread of COVID because there's been strong efforts to make sure that there is very tight adherence to the protocols that we know work, which is wearing a mask, staying socially distanced, washing hands and using effective PPE (personal protective equipment). So we think that that transparency in getting community trust and buy in is a hugely important point and it's something that we will be directly pushing for.

11. Is the intention to check to see that no one has COVID or just that there is a reasonably low overall density? If there is some density of the virus in the pool testing, will those individuals get tested again to identify the positive cases in the pool?

We are working with student health to determine more details about the thresholds for density of COVID-19 in an effort to improve transparency.

With regard to the second question, the answer is absolutely yes. If the pool comes back positive (i.e. any individual in the pool contributed a positive sample), all individuals in the pool will undergo a full diagnostic COVID test and will be quarantined. That's part of the intention of the surveillance testing is to quickly identify any cases on campus, get individuals quarantined/isolated, and ensure that in particular we don't have further asymptomatic spreading of COVID-19.

12. Is it possible to take the antibody test instead of the viral test?

The answer to that question is no. Currently, student health is acting on the public health guidance which states that we do not know enough about the immunological response to COVID to allow an antibody test to substitute for direct viral testing. That may change if the science and the public health opinion changes, but currently student health will not be offering antibody testing.
13. Can I get a test at an outside location and then send that test result to student health and substitute that for a test at Penn Pavilion?

No. So, you cannot, for example, go get a test at CVS and then submit that result to student health. For your baseline testing, you will need to get tested at student health if you're planning on coming to campus. The same will go for the pooled surveillance testing.

14. How are grad student instructors of in person classes be prioritized in testing? Can students without cars bike to or walk to Penn Pavilion to get tested?

Your program, school, or department should be prioritizing testing for students with the earliest educational or work obligations on campus. If you feel like that is not the case for your program or department, please reach out to GPSC. Students can walk or bike to Penn Pavilion to get tested.

15. I’m concerned about the wording of the Duke compact, that outlines vaccination requirement, and would like to know why the COVID protocols requiring us to commit to receive the flu vaccine. Why are we being asked to commit to this?

This is a complex question with a complex answer. First, let’s discuss the underlying principle behind Influenza (flu) vaccination. In the middle of this crisis, with the strain COVID-19 is placing on our health system, the damage it's doing to our communities, the lives that it's taking, the disability that it's causing, we really don't want to have the combinatorial effect of a severe flu season pile up and exacerbate this pandemic by straining hospital capacity beyond its breaking point.

We are fortunate to have a vaccine for flu, and while the effectiveness varies year to year, it is every year significantly better than doing nothing. We do not have a vaccine for COVID-19 at this time. So, by not fully and appropriately addressing one of these pandemics with our most effective tool (immunization), we open the potential for a combinatorial effect that will overwhelm our health system and result in increased morbidity and mortality across our population, which is unacceptable. The expert opinion in epidemiology and public health is to prominently promote widespread adoption of the flu vaccine, especially in communities that are attempting to return to in-person work or educational environments in the time of COVID.

Now, to address some myths about the flu vaccine. Although many students feel that they only get the flu when they get the influenza virus, or that they come down with the flu when they get the vaccine. This is a very common myth, but there is no reputable evidence from the epidemiological literature supporting that. So, in terms of why the Compact is requiring flu vaccination, it is essentially recognizing that the flu vaccine is an essential component of responding to the annual influenza outbreak.

So, if you're someone who has a legitimate personal religious or health opposition or inability to tolerate the influenza vaccine, then of course, just as with any other mandatory immunization, then there'll be a process set up for that to ensure that your rights are protected.
16. The Duke compact says that I agree to be tested at the beginning of the semester, but if I'm not coming to campus this semester, I don't have to be tested, but I still have to sign the compact.

This is the source of a lot of the confusion. Essentially if you are not coming to campus, you do not have to be tested.

If you are not coming to campus, you do not have to be tested even though the compact mentions testing as part of the framework. You should refer to the policy documents that will explain the specific requirements for students coming to campus. We're trying to help make sure that the messaging on this will be more consistent and clearer going forward.

17. I have seen no evidence that the flu vaccine is effective in fighting COVID-19. I am concerned about the open-ended nature of this point and ask for some more information.

Please see the above response concerning the flu vaccine in particular. In terms of the open nature of the compact which talks about receiving a COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available, we've had additional clarification since the Compact went clarifying that students are not signing an open ended agreement to get a COVID vaccine regardless of the particular vaccine or their own personal circumstances. The Compact does not have an enforcement mechanism to require you to get the COVID vaccine.

Once a COVID vaccine becomes something that we can start thinking about in more practical terms, then GPSC will work with the Duke of ministration to advocate for the most effective, fair, and safe vaccination approach for our community. That is going to be a conversation that will be firmly engaged in going forward. GPSC will strongly advocate that students will not be required to take a vaccine that is unsafe and at the same time to ensure that we have widespread vaccination with an effective and safe COVID vaccine as soon as it is available and when it is indicated to administer to our community as opposed to frontline workers throughout the Durham community (aside from the frontline workers that we do have on campus, including some of whom are graduate and professional students.)

18. I never got the flu shot and never had the flu, why am I being forced to get a flu vaccine?

We’re happy to hear that you have never had the flu despite never having received the flu vaccine. But on a population level that trend does not hold true for everyone. And in fact, we know that a significant portion of people who don't get a flu vaccine do contract the flu every year. It is standard practice in many working environments (even outside of healthcare) to require the flu vaccine as a matter of public health.
19. **Do we know how the flu vaccines will be distributed to everyone?**

Historically the flu vaccination campaign is administered *en masse* at the Bryan center to huge numbers of people at a time. Our understanding is that, the flu influenza vaccine distribution process will essentially be ramped up to, be make it compatible with social distancing which may include things such as time slots or offering additional locations to receive a flu vaccine. It's also important to note that the flu shot is not currently available yet, either at Duke or commercially at local pharmacies. So this is something that will come later on in the fall semester. You should expect to receive explicit and clear communication from student health about that will provide additional information about the logistics for that.

20. **I still need a TB test, are those tests and other immunizations also available when I get my COVID tests?**

*Note: the response that was given during the section of the town hall we now know to be incorrect. Student health is offering immunizations and other routine student health services at the same time as COVID testing. Please reach out to student health if you have any questions about this specifically.*