



## Updated UNOLS COVID-19 Guidance

The following information and guidance is provided as an update and adjustment to previous UNOLS Guidance related to conducting science onboard U.S.

Academic Research Fleet vessels

(see:

[https://www.unols.org/sites/default/files/COVID19\\_ConsiderationsForConductingSeagoingScience\\_Vers.1.8\\_1Jun20.pdf](https://www.unols.org/sites/default/files/COVID19_ConsiderationsForConductingSeagoingScience_Vers.1.8_1Jun20.pdf))

This update has been developed with advice and guidance provided by George Washington Medical Faculty Associates.

Those elements of the previous UNOLS Guidance not addressed in the following paragraphs remain in effect.

### **Vaccinations:**

- Published data indicate COVID-19 vaccinations greatly decrease the likelihood that a person will become severely ill or die from a COVID-19 infection.
- Not all persons who are vaccinated will gain full immunity against infection. Estimates for vaccine failure vary.
- Although it appears that if vaccinated persons are infected, they are less likely to transmit disease, the incidence of transmission from vaccinated to unvaccinated persons is yet to be established.
- Currently three COVID-19 vaccines are authorized by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). Those vaccines are the:
  - Pfizer-BioNTech vaccination
  - Moderna COVID-19 vaccination
  - Johnson & Johnson – Janssen COVID-19 vaccination
- Published data indicates that all FDA-EUA vaccines are safe, but in accordance with FDA rules, surveillance for adverse events has continued.
- Vaccinations are being distributed across the U.S. and administered locally in accordance with state and local guidelines.
- Accessibility to vaccinations is improving and vaccines are widely available.
- It has been reported that Pfizer intends to seek full FDA approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in 2021.



It is uniformly accepted that vaccine-associated protection against acquiring, becoming ill from and transmitting COVID-19 is not absolute. Thus, the CDC recommends any vaccinated person who develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should immediately enter isolation in accordance with the guidelines.

For vaccinated persons who remain asymptomatic, even if they have been exposed to a known case of COVID-19, absolute guidance for amending quarantine and testing protocols are not available. Rather, quarantine and testing requirements are lifted except under specific conditions, especially those of “congregate settings”. Given that a ship is indeed a congregate setting, the risk benefit analysis of the small chance of onboarding a person who is incubating or asymptomatic (by altering existing protocols), must be weighed against the possibility of having an active, symptomatic person with COVID-19 on-board a sailing ship.

### **While vaccinations are still distributed under an FDA EUA:**

#### **Fully Vaccinated – crew and science party**

- For Offshore Cruises greater than 7 days in duration
  - Have a negative PCR test before traveling
  - Follow Travel Recommendations below
  - Complete Pre-cruise self-isolation for 7 days limiting exposure to people out of the household
  - Conduct and report daily symptom checks
  - Have a negative PCR or Antigen test completed on day 7 of isolation
  - Board the ship
- For cruises less than 7 days in duration or coastal/local cruises
  - Avoid unnecessary contact with non-family members to maximum extent possible for seven days prior to boarding the ship
  - Conduct and report daily symptom checks for seven days prior to boarding the ship
  - Have a negative PCR or Antigen test within two days of boarding
  - Board ship

#### **Non-fully vaccinated – crew and science party**

- For those crew and science party members who are fully vaccinated
  - Follow guidelines above for Fully Vaccinated – crew and science party

- For those crew and / or science party members **who are not fully vaccinated** Follow prior ship operator’s guidelines (developed per UNOLS [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Considerations for Making Decision Regarding Conducting Science Onboard U.S. Academic Research Fleet Vessels V.1.8](#)) for pre-cruise quarantine/strict self-isolation and testing.



### **Travel Recommendations – for crew and science party who travel to meet the ship**

- Travel to port should be conducted in private vehicle when possible.
- Travelers should always wear a mask and minimize interaction during travel.
- For 2 weeks prior to travel, limit outside exposures to people out of household

### **Cruise Risk Assessments -**

- Ship operators shall continue to conduct pre-cruise risk assessments related to operating in the COVID-19 environment in concert with Chief Scientists.
- Risk determinations, including identification of risk mitigation strategies employed, shall continue to be reported to the funding agencies and the UNOLS Office
- Ship operators may be requested to brief agencies and the UNOLS Office on risk assessments and mitigation plans for high or medium risk cruises

### **Once the FDA approves vaccine(s) and they are readily available to all personnel**

UNOLS highly recommends that cruises sail only with fully vaccinated personnel.

### **Wearing of Masks**

- Per current U.S. Coast Guard and CDC guidelines, the wearing of masks onboard vessels of the Academic Research Fleet is required:
  - Mariners on non-passenger commercial ships should be guided by CDC's Interim Guidance for Ships on Managing Suspected or Confirmed Cases of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in following the requirements of the mask order. Per the Interim Guidance, crew should wear masks when outside of their single occupancy cabin unless work duties prevent their safe use or necessitate personal protective equipment due to worksite hazards. Mariners would not be expected to wear a mask while they are alone or are eating, sleeping, or resting.
  - Additionally, mariners must wear masks when other persons (e.g., visitors, pilots, inspectors) join the ship for any period of time and when mariners disembark the ship. During these activities, masks should be worn in addition to maintaining a distance of six feet between individuals.
  - Per CDC Guidelines, mask wearing can be relaxed for vaccinated personnel working outdoors (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>) where mask wearing may impede safely conducting deck operations.