

# Risk Mitigation Strategies for Infectious Illness

North Dakota State University is committed to protecting the rights, safety and welfare of all individuals participating in NDSU research projects. The IRB recommends that PIs monitor current transmission rates related to airborne infectious illness (COVID-19, influenza, etc.) and take appropriate steps to mitigate the risk of transmission.

Strategies to reduce risk include:

- **Consider the physical environment of the research space** - The design of the physical research space (e.g., ventilation, room size, time spent in room, number of people sharing room, etc.) can be factors that drive infection risk. PIs are encouraged to consider any improvements that are feasible to implement in their research space (e.g., HEPA filters)
- **Screen for symptoms of infectious illness** – Encourage research team members and participants to reschedule face-to face study visits if they are experiencing any symptoms of illness.
- **Vaccinations** – Maintaining up-to-date vaccinations is one of the best ways to prevent infection of with vaccination-preventable illnesses (e.g., influenza, COVID, whooping cough, meningitis, etc.). If current vaccination status is listed as an inclusion/exclusion criterion, the research team members are permitted to require proof of vaccination from participants prior to face-to-face interaction. Include this inclusion criterion in all recruitment and consent materials.
- **Masks or face coverings** – When transmission rates of airborne illness are high, or an individual is more vulnerable to illness, wearing a mask or face covering is a reliable way to mitigate the risk of transmission. PIs can request that participants wear a mask while participating in research. In addition, research teams should be prepared to wear a mask/face covering if requested by the participant.
- **Sanitization procedures** – Research personnel should use discipline-appropriate best practices for disinfecting equipment participants come in contact with. In addition, hand sanitizer should be made available for both participants and research personnel.

We share your commitment to continuing to do exciting work at NDSU and hope that these guidelines help establish procedures for ensuring the safety of the entire NDSU community. If you have questions, comments, or concerns regarding safe face-to-face research at NDSU, please contact us.

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