Resuming Research Activities During COVID-19 FAQs

1. Q: If a participant responds positively to a COVID-19 screening question, does the participant call their own doctor, or do they (or research personnel) call the BU COVID-19 hotline for further assessment? If the participant does not have a health care provider, what should they do?

A. Participants who indicate they have symptoms of COVID-19 should call their own health care providers for further instructions, including whether they should get tested for COVID-19. If a participant does not have a health care provider, they should be referred to the City of Boston website for COVID-19 testing sites. If the participant lives outside of Boston, they should be referred to the State of Massachusetts testing sites. For additional local resources, participants should call the COVID-19 hotline at 2-1-1.

2. Q: If a participant is screened over the phone by research personnel, has no symptoms and is scheduled for a study visit will they need clearance documentation to enter BU buildings for their study visit? If so, would a text or email from the research personnel be sufficient documentation?

A: If a participant is asked to provide screening documentation, a text or email from research personnel will be sufficient for building personnel. Investigators should communicate their research plans with building coordinators. Research building contacts can be found here, and all campus buildings can be found here.

3. Q: If a participant discovers after a study visit that they have COVID-19 – do they call the research personnel, the COVID-19 hotline, or somewhere else to report their status?

A: The participant does not need to call anyone. The positive test will be handled by the participant’s healthcare provider/testing site. The participant’s provider/testing site will follow MA State protocols and the BU PI and/or BU personnel that were in contact with the participant will be alerted by the appropriate contact tracers, if necessary.

4. Q: If a study participant may have been exposed to COVID-19 as a result of the research (e.g. a research assistant tests positive) – who contacts the participant? The research personnel, a BU representative/contact tracer, or someone else? What type of personal information will need to be collected from and shared about the participant?

A: BU will notify the Boston Public Health Commission or MA Department of Health of any positive test results of its employees/students. One of these entities will follow-up with any participants who may have been exposed. Investigators should collect the name and phone number of each research participant in case contact tracing is necessary. Investigators should inform participants that their name and phone number may be forwarded to these entities for contact tracing purposes, when required.
5. Q: If a study participant may have been exposed as a result of the research, can they get tested at BU or would they need to find another location to get tested?
A. Participants should call their own health care providers for further instructions, including whether they should get tested for COVID-19. If a participant does not have a health care provider, they should be referred to the City of Boston website for COVID-19 testing sites. If the participant lives outside of Boston, they should be referred to the State of Massachusetts testing sites. For additional local resources, participants should call the COVID-19 hotline at 2-1-1.

6. Q. If a participant had COVID-19 and has since recovered, do they need to provide documentation from a PCP or lab that they have tested negative twice before participating in research?
A. No. If the participant has isolated for the time period instructed after testing positive, and are symptom free, they do not need any documentation.

7. Q. BU guidelines require a 6ft distance between all persons during research procedures, limiting closer proximity (e.g. 1:1 spotting/shadowing, application of devices, etc.) to 15 minutes or less. Is the 15 minutes the total amount of time allowed for less than 6ft distancing, or can there be a rest or break period in between to allow for successive interactions of less than 6ft distancing during a study visit? (e.g. >6ft for 15 minutes, 30-minute break, >6ft for 15 minutes, etc.).

A. The MA Department of Public Health considers any consecutive interactions that total up to more than 15 minutes a “close contact situation”. Which means that if either the researcher or the research participant was to become a positive case and has had close contact with each other within 48 hours then quarantining would be required. Therefore, the BU Medical Advisory Group is still recommending limiting research subject interactions to less than 15 minutes to avoid falling into the close contact categorization.