

UConn HEALTH

UConn Health Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination Policy Frequently Asked Questions

Updated: August 25, 2021

Exemptions

Q. What types of exemptions or deferrals are being considered?

A. We are allowing exemptions based on medical or religious reasons. Detailed information on the exemption processes are contained in our [policy guidance and procedures](#). More information on medical or personal deferrals are contained in this section.

Q. What if I have a medical condition that prevents me from getting vaccinated?

A. Workforce Members who believe that they have a medical condition that prevents them from receiving or necessitates a delay in receiving the COVID-19 vaccine may request a medical exemption or deferral. Workforce Members requesting a medical exemption or a medical deferral must complete and submit Section I of the [Medical Exemption, Medical Deferral, or Personal Deferral Request form](#) by **August 30, 2021**. If a Workforce member is unable to obtain documents to support their exemption request by the deadline the employee will be granted up to thirty (30) days to submit information from their healthcare provide to support their request for an exemption. Detailed instructions on this requirement are located directly on the Medical Exemption, Medical Deferral, or Personal Deferral Request form.

Q. What medical conditions will be considered for exemption?

Examples of medical conditions that will be considered for exemption include:

- A documented history of severe or immediate-type allergic reaction to any ingredient of **all** currently available COVID-19 vaccine brands. (Vaccine ingredients for each of the vaccine brands is available at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/eua/index.html>). There must be a documented severe or immediate-type allergic reaction to an ingredient in all currently available vaccines, medical contraindications to all currently available vaccines, or a combination that would not allow an individual to receive any of the currently available vaccines.

- A documented history of severe allergy or immediate-type hypersensitivity reaction to a previous COVID-19 vaccination, and also a separate contraindication to all currently available COVID-19 vaccine brands.

Q. What medical conditions are being considered for a postponement or deferral of COVID-19 vaccination?

A. Examples of medical conditions that may qualify for deferral include:

- Active treatment for a medical condition that is contraindicated with the vaccine
- Prior positive COVID-19 test within specified timeframes
- Upcoming scheduled surgery

Additional details and timing allowances for these conditions are outlined in the [COVID-19 Vaccination Medical Exemption/Deferral Request Form](#).

Q: I had COVID-19 infection earlier this year and tested positive for COVID-19 antibodies. I am otherwise healthy and not taking any medications. Why am I required to get a vaccine?

A: At this time, we do not know how long someone who had COVID-19 is protected from a repeat infection, whether the person tested positive for the COVID-19 antibody or not. Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that reinfection is possible, CDC recommends that individuals who were previously diagnosed with COVID-19 still get the vaccine, regardless of whether their infection caused them to be symptomatic or asymptomatic.

A Workforce Member may request a deferral of vaccination if they have had a COVID-19 positive test within the last 30 days or if they were treated with Monoclonal Antibody infusion within 90 days of the request.

Q. What if I have a sincerely held religious or spiritual belief that prevents me from getting vaccinated?

Workforce Members may request an exemption on the basis of a sincerely held religious belief or practice that prohibits them from receiving the COVID-19 vaccination by completing the [Religious Exemption Request](#) form. More information on the religious exemption process are contained in our [policy guidance and procedures](#).

Q. If I have already been approved for a religious exemption for other types of immunizations, such as the flu shot, do I need to fill request an exemption for the COVID-19 vaccination?

A. Yes. All Workforce Members seeking any type of exemption or deferral from the mandatory vaccination requirement must timely complete and submit the appropriate exemption/deferral form. Religious exemption requests from those who have previously received a religious exemption for immunizations at UConn Health will be granted, unless new facts have arisen in the interim that do not support the exemption. If you are requesting a religious exemption and have received one in the past for a prior vaccination, you should explain that you have been exempted previously under the first question on the exemption form.

Q. Are there any additional circumstances in which I may qualify for a personal deferral?

A. Workforce Members under very limited circumstances may qualify for a personal deferral. Those qualified Workforce Members may request a personal deferral by completing and uploading the [Medical Exemption, Medical Deferral, or Personal Deferral Request form](#) by **August 30, 2021**.

Only the following circumstances will be considered for a personal deferral:

- Pregnancy (proof of pregnancy required)
- Breastfeeding for a period of twelve (12) months from the birth of the child
- Currently on block leave and will not return to work until after September 10, 2021. Workforce Members on an approved block leave are not required to complete the weekly testing requirements outlined in this policy.

Q: I understand that I can request a deferral from the COVID vaccine if I am pregnant or breastfeeding; does UConn Health recommend that I seek a deferral if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

A: No, UConn Health does not recommend that individuals who are pregnant or breastfeeding seek a deferral from vaccination, though this is a personal decision that you should make in consultation with your physician. Growing evidence about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy demonstrates that the benefits of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine outweigh potential risks at this time. The CDC, as well as the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine, all recommend that pregnant and lactating individuals should be vaccinated against COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for all people 12 years and older, including people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to get pregnant now, or might become pregnant in the future. The CDC has warned that the increased circulation of the highly contagious [Delta variant](#), the low vaccine uptake among pregnant people, and the increased risk of severe illness and pregnancy complications related to COVID-19 infection among pregnant people make vaccination for this population more urgent than ever. Here is more information from the CDC about [COVID-19 Vaccines While Pregnant or Breastfeeding](#)

Q. What if I believe that I qualify for multiple types of exemptions? May I submit multiple exemption requests?

A. If you believe that you qualify for more than one type of exemption, please select and upload your primary exemption request and email VAXquestion@uchc.edu for further instruction on how to submit and upload any additional subsequent exemption requests.

Q. If I am approved for an exemption or deferral (as listed above), what additional requirements must I comply with?

A. If a Workforce Member is approved for an exemption or deferral, the Workforce Member will be required to comply with the following protective measures:

- Receive a weekly COVID-19 NAAT or PCR testing.
- Must follow the present travel guidelines for out-of-state travel with HR documentation and obtain a COVID-19 NAAT or PCR (not rapid antigen) test before returning to work following any out-of-state travel that lasts 24 hours or more. Additional testing following travel may be required under the instruction of the COVID-19 Call Center clinicians.
- Be required to 1) wear a mask at ALL times while present at work; 2) wear protective eyewear when providing clinical care on any patient; and 3) wear an N95 or equivalent respirator when performing any aerosol-generating procedure on any patient.

Updates to these requirements may be made based on evolving state and federal public health guidance.

Q. I am currently awaiting a decision on my exemption or deferral request. Do I need to follow these additional requirements?

A. Any Workforce Member who is awaiting a decision from the Exemption Committees and in which no decision has been made by September 10, 2021 must also comply with weekly testing and the other additional protective measures mentioned above.

Q. What if I refuse to get vaccinated and I am not granted an exemption?

A: Receiving the COVID-19 vaccination is now a condition of employment at UConn Health. If you don't receive the vaccination, you will be disciplined in accordance with applicable progressive disciplinary procedures.