

UConn HEALTH

UConn Health Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination Policy Frequently Asked Questions

Updated: August 25, 2021

On August 18, 2021, UConn Health implemented a policy requiring all of our workforce to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The full policy and related materials are available [here](#). The following guidance consists of frequently asked questions regarding the policy, including information on the process, timing, and expectations. If you have additional questions, please contact VAXQuestion@uchc.edu.

General Questions

Q. Why is UConn Health mandating COVID-19 vaccinations?

A. UConn Health is committed to protecting our patients, staff, learners, and the community from COVID-19. In our continued effort to protect our UConn Health community, and in consideration of guidance released by the Connecticut Hospital Association, the state of Connecticut, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and a variety of public health authorities and professional organizations, UConn Health is joining many other health systems in the country to mandate vaccination for its workforce. These organizations believe, and we agree, that the COVID-19 vaccines that are available are safe and effective, and that being vaccinated against COVID-19 is the best way to prevent sickness, infection, and subsequent transmission of the virus. With the emergence of the Delta variant, a highly contagious version of COVID-19, we feel strongly that widespread vaccination, now more than ever, is a critical tool in slowing or stopping the pandemic and in protecting our community.

Q. I am a UConn Storrs/Regional Employee. Am I subject to the UConn Health policy?

A. No. While our policies and procedures are similar with UConn Storrs/Regional, they do vary slightly due to our clinical, patient, and medical center responsibilities here at UConn Health. UConn-Storrs employees who work in UConn Health facilities should follow the policies and procedures established for UConn Storrs/Regional

employees regarding required COVID-19 vaccines. For information on the UConn Storrs/Regional policy, please go to [their website](#).

Q: Who is included in this mandatory vaccination policy?

A: The COVID-19 Mandatory Vaccination Policy applies to all UConn Health employees, volunteers, medical staff, and any contracted individual receiving a UConn Health-issued badge (referred to as **Workforce Members** throughout). Please note, Workforce Members represented by bargaining units under the jurisdiction of the State's Office of Labor Relations (OLR-OPM) are not currently subject to mandatory vaccination requirements of this policy until negotiations have concluded. They are subject to the mandatory reporting, testing and health and safety requirements if unvaccinated.

Q. I work fully remote or in a non-clinical environment. Do I need to comply with this policy?

A. Yes. This policy applies to all of our workforce, regardless of whether they work on-site or remotely.

Q. Are there any exemptions to this policy?

A. Yes. For more information on exemptions, please review our policy [guidance and procedures](#) or scroll to the Exemptions section of the FAQ.

Q. When are the deadlines for vaccination(s)?

A: All Workforce Members must receive their first dose of the vaccine (and upload proof of vaccination) no later than **September 10, 2021** and any applicable second dose (and upload proof of vaccination) no later than **October 15, 2021**. Workforce Members will not be considered to have met these deadlines without uploading proof of vaccination.

Q. Do I have until October 15 if I choose to receive the single dose vaccine?

A. No. Proof of vaccination (whether that be a first dose or a single dose vaccine) must be provided by **September 10, 2021**.

Q. Where can I schedule a COVID-19 vaccination?

A. Appointments can be scheduled in a variety of ways, including:

- Through [UConn Health myChart](#)
- By calling the Vaccine Call Center at 860-679-5589
- By visiting the Outpatient Pavilion 1st floor (walk-ins welcome for first doses only)
 - Hours of operation:
 - Monday: 1 PM-3:30 PM
 - Tuesday: 1 PM-3:30 PM
 - Wednesday: 7 AM-12 PM
 - Thursday: 1 PM-3:30 PM
 - Friday: 1:30 PM-4:00 PM
 - Saturday: 7:30 AM-10:30 AM
 - Sunday: Closed
- Through your own medical provider if you are not a UConn Health patient
- By scheduling through another provider identified through the [state's vaccination portal](#).

Q. Will getting the vaccine cost me money?

A. No. There are no out-of-pocket expenses to individuals who receive their COVID-19 vaccine at UConn Health. Insurance will be billed for administration of the vaccine, but copays or additional expenses to the patient are never charged.

Q. Do I have to receive my vaccination at UConn Health?

A. No. Workforce Members are not required to receive vaccination at UConn Health, but are encouraged to do so.

Q. Which vaccines are being accepted through this policy?

A. Workforce Members will meet the COVID-19 vaccine requirement if they have been vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine that has either been authorized for use in the United States by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or been authorized for use outside of the United States by the World Health Organization (WHO). Workforce Members who have received a COVID-19 vaccine that does not meet the above criteria will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Q. If I feel sick after my vaccination, will UConn Health provide me with paid leave?

A. Workforce members feeling sick after the vaccination should request sick time off in accordance with their regular call-out procedures.

Q. I recently received and accepted an offer of employment at UConn Health. Does this policy apply to me?

A. Yes. New hires at UConn Health are required to have at least one dose of an authorized vaccine or have an approved exemption by their first day of employment.

Q. I work on the evening or night shift in the hospital. Will I be able to receive a COVID-19 vaccine during my shift?

A. At this time, no. We are continuing to evaluate ways to make the vaccine more accessible to evening or night shift Workforce Members and will communicate with more information as it becomes available. However, vaccines are widely available in Connecticut by scheduling through another provider identified through the [state's vaccination portal](#).

Q. Where can I get more information on the COVID-19 vaccines?

A. UConn Health has a separate FAQ for general vaccine-related questions located [here](#). We continue to update our FAQs in accordance with changing guidance.

Q. Will UConn Health require COVID-19 vaccine booster shots?

A. We are currently monitoring recommendations for booster doses for the general public in the coming weeks and months. We will communicate any subsequent information or decisions as they become available. For more information on third doses, please review our [third dose FAQ](#).

Q. I got my vaccine at UConn Health. Do I still need to provide proof of vaccination?

A. Yes. Regardless of where you received your vaccination, we ask that you upload proof of vaccination in accordance with our policy.

Q. What types of proof of vaccination is UConn Health accepting?

A. Acceptable forms of proof of vaccination include your COVID-19 Vaccination Card or by taking a screenshot of your MyChart vaccination record, making sure to include the dates and type of vaccine. Please ensure that your MyChart vaccination record does not include any additional medical information.

Q: What if I lost my COVID-19 Vaccination Card? How do I obtain proof of vaccination?

A: If you have lost your COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card, did not receive your vaccination through MyChart, and are unable to get an additional copy from your provider, you may call the Department of Public Health (DPH) at (860) 509-7929 to request your Official Immunization Certificate from the CT Immunization Information System (CT WiZ) at the Department of Public Health. You can also get your official immunization record directly through the [CT WiZ Public Portal](#), maintained by DPH. For more information on how to use this secure portal, visit DPH's information about the [CONNECTICUT IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM](#).

Q. I work at UConn Health, but I am a contractor. How do I provide proof of vaccination or request an exemption?

A. Contractors not directly employed by UConn Health will not follow the same process to demonstrate their vaccination status. Instead, UConn Health will require the companies with whom we contract to enforce the mandatory vaccination policy with their employees working in or on UConn Health facilities or properties. Contracted companies will be required to attest to such compliance in accordance with our policy.

Q. Will UConn Health accept proof of vaccination obtained in another country?

A. Yes. Though UConn Health encourages its workforce to receive FDA-approved vaccinations, we will accept proof of vaccinations that have been authorized by the World Health Organization (WHO). International Workforce Members must present proof of vaccination in the form of a copy of the WHO Certificate of Vaccination (WHO Vaccine Booklet) or documentation to include a statement signed by a healthcare provider/organization authorized to administer the vaccination attesting to the dates and name of COVID-19 vaccination given. All documentation must be submitted in English or accompanied by a certified translation at the Workforce Member's expense. Please contact Human Resources at VAXQuestion@uchc.edu for further information on submitting and uploading your proof of vaccination.

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.