Required COVID-19 Vaccinations for Team Members and Medical Staff
Frequently Asked Questions

Summary Points

- Due to the highly contagious and more severe Delta variant, the American Hospital Association, Ohio Hospital Association, the American Medical Association and many other health care organizations are now endorsing vaccination requirements among healthcare workers in order to protect patients and healthcare workers.
- Standing with the other Cincinnati and Ohio health systems, TriHealth is announcing a requirement for all team members, physicians and volunteers (i.e., badge holders) to be vaccinated. And this is very much like the long-standing requirement for flu and other vaccinations at TriHealth.
- In addition, all team members are required to wear masks at work in patient care and non-patient care settings due to high prevalence of COVID in the region and new CDC recommendations regarding indoor masking.
- As is currently the case with the flu and other required vaccines, individuals may request vaccination exemption for a medical or deeply held religious beliefs.
- Team members must complete their full vaccine regimen by early October.
- Failure to comply with this vaccine requirement may result in disciplinary action.

Q: Why is TriHealth requiring COVID-19 vaccinations?
A: The highly contagious Delta variant is now spreading rapidly amongst large unvaccinated populations across the country, including here in the Greater Cincinnati region. Nationally, hospitalizations are increasing 60% week over week, and locally hospitalizations are increasing a whopping 80% week over week. At TriHealth, we have experienced a 40% increase in admissions, and virtually all of those patients were unvaccinated. It's clear that we are now in the fourth wave of this pandemic, but today it is largely a pandemic of the unvaccinated and, sadly, those unable to be vaccinated like children. TriHealth is committed to offering our patients high quality, safe, patient-centered care, and our team members a safe workplace. Most team members have already been vaccinated but given our mission to serve and protect our patients, we are working to get to as close to 100% vaccination rate as possible to ensure the safest possible work and patient care environment and to minimize the risk of transmitting COVID-19.

Q. Who is required to receive the COVID-19 vaccination?
A. The requirement applies to all TriHealth badged individuals. This includes, but is not limited to: team members, physicians, volunteers, contractors, vendors, consultants, students, job-shadowers, etc.

Q: As a team member, will I lose my job if I don't get vaccinated?
A: As with the flu vaccine, receiving the COVID-19 vaccination is now a condition of employment. If you don't get the vaccination, you will not be able to work at TriHealth unless you receive an approved exemption or deferment of vaccination to a later date due to medical contraindications or precautions.

Q: I still have many questions about the vaccine that I need to have answered before I feel comfortable getting vaccinated. Who can I talk to?
To better understand the concerns of some of our team members about the vaccines and answer their questions, we are planning a number of forums at sites throughout the system during August and September. These safe, respectful forums will offer an opportunity to listen to the concerns of those who have chosen not to be vaccinated so we can better understand and help answer questions about the vaccine through open dialogue. Dates, times and locations will be provided shortly.

Q: Does the COVID-19 vaccine requirement also include an annual booster?
A: The need and timing for a COVID-19 vaccine booster has not yet been determined by public health and medical experts. TriHealth clinical leaders will continue to monitor this and update team members over time.

Q: Is it legal to require team members get a COVID-19 vaccine?
A: Yes. State and federal employment laws allow private companies to require vaccinations. Many healthcare organizations across the nation have already put in place vaccination requirements—including many in Ohio--and we expect most others will over time—just as has been the case with the flu and other vaccines in the healthcare setting.

Q: Why is TriHealth requiring COVID vaccination now, while the COVID-19 vaccines are currently approved by the FDA under "Emergency Use" authorization rather than "full approval"?
A: We are taking this necessary step now because as CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky recently stated, "the war has changed…the Delta variant is the most transmissible virus we know about." With the rapid increase in COVID infections due to this much more contagious variant, including among our own unvaccinated team members, we had no choice but to change and adapt our response to this much more serious threat. The vaccines all have Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), which is an official form of FDA approval that allows for the manufacturing and approval of vaccines to be streamlined in a public health emergency such as a pandemic. EUA does not mean shortcuts were taken in the research or clinical studies to ensure vaccine safety. The COVID-19 vaccines went through the same trials as other vaccines and drugs, just on a different track than is commonly used by the FDA. Over 160 million doses of vaccine have now been given in the U.S. and more than 3 billion worldwide, and the FDA and CDC continue to categorize all available brands to be both safe and effective. As the virus continues to circulate and variants of the virus (which are mutations that are concerning) are identified, now is the time to take every available step to curb the spread of the disease, including requiring team members to receive the vaccine.

Q: Are there exemptions to required COVID-19 vaccinations?
A: Yes. There is an exemption process for individuals who feel they have a medical or religious reason for exemption. Individuals seeking a Medical Exemption will need to complete the Medical Declination form for COVID 19 and submit to Employee Health by emailing their declination form to CovidVaccination@trihealth.com. Individuals seeking a Non-Medical/Religious declination will need to complete the Non-Medical/Religious Declination form and email it to their Human Resource Business Partner or fax to 513-852-3908. Individuals approved for an exemption (whether medical or non-medical/religious belief) or deferment must undergo weekly COVID-19 testing.

Q: I don't work directly with patients, why do I need to get the vaccine?
A: Yes, all TriHealth badged individuals are required to get the vaccine. Getting the vaccine helps protect you, our patients, your family and coworkers, and our community. Most of our team members who have gotten sick with COVID-19 have contracted it in the community, not at work. The more people in the community who get the vaccine, the better chance we have of eliminating the COVID-19 virus.

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 experts recommend 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. There is no recommended minimum interval between infection and vaccination, but infected individuals should defer their vaccination until they recover from acute symptoms.

Q: Can I get tested to see if I have the COVID-19 antibody before I am required to take the vaccine?
A: Antibody testing for COVID immunity remains inconclusive and it is not known how long someone who had COVID is protected from repeat infection. However, we do know COVID-19 infection does not offer the broad range of protection that the vaccination provides. Full vaccination remains the most proven and safest way to protect yourself from COVID infection.

Q: Is the vaccine safe?
A: The science is clear – with more than 3 billion doses administered worldwide, COVID vaccines have proven beyond a doubt to be safe and effective at reducing the risk of transmission to others, decreasing hospitalizations and preventing COVID-related deaths. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been shown to be very effective and safe. Few adverse effects have been reported. The administration of the Johnson & Johnson (J&J, Janssen) vaccine was temporarily put on hold after the vaccine caused blood clots in six out 6.8 million patients. The FDA has subsequently removed its pause and instead recommends that women younger than 50 be made aware of the rare complication. Some people might be nervous about the

vaccine. However, as individuals working in healthcare, we have a duty to protect our patients and each other. Getting the vaccine will safely protect you, your family and the patients we serve. The risks from contracting the virus and dying are far greater than the possible risks from receiving the vaccine.

Q: Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?
A: No. It is not possible to get COVID-19 infection from the vaccines as none of them contain live virus.

Q: Does it matter which vaccine I get?
A: No, that is a personal choice. The brand of vaccine we provide is dependent upon which brand we can obtain from the state of Ohio but TriHealth will work with team members to direct them to sites administering their vaccine of choice.

Q: How do I get a vaccination if haven't had one yet?
Vaccinations for team members will be available at McCullough Hyde Memorial Hospital, Bethesda North Outpatient Imaging (BNOI), and Good Samaritan Hospital from 8/10/21 through early October. You can sign up via the SignUp Genius link here.

Q: What if I get vaccinated from the drug store or somewhere not affiliated with TriHealth? How do I prove I got one?
To submit documentation for completed vaccinations outside of TriHealth please upload your official documentation (including your name, date of birth or Employee ID, date, brand and lot number) to **Submit Vaccine Documentation.**