

2021-2022 SEASONAL INFLUENZA QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



EMAIL: FluDocumentation@TriHealth.com

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VACCINATION INFORMATION

Q1: Do I have to get a seasonal influenza (flu) shot?

A: For the safety of you, your team members, our patients and our community, **all** TriHealth team members are required to get a seasonal influenza (flu) shot by November 12, 2021. Team members who have a currently approved declination will be required to wear a surgical mask for the duration of flu season within 6 feet of patients if you are not already required to wear a mask for COVID-19 or any other infection control precautions. Acceptable documentation for a medical declination is a statement that the team member has a specified medical contraindication to receiving the seasonal flu vaccine signed by a physician (MD or DO) or licensed independent practitioner (NP).

Team members who do not have a documented and approved medical or religious reason for declining this year's flu vaccine (and those team members who have a documented reason but refuse to wear a surgical mask) will not be permitted to work. They will be placed on unpaid administrative **leave for flu vaccinations** for 60 days, the maximum allowed.

Q2: Are agency workers, contractors, or volunteers working at TriHealth required to get a flu vaccine?

A: Yes. Anyone who is issued a TriHealth badge must follow the same flu vaccination requirements as TriHealth team members.

Q3: When and where can I get a flu shot?

A: TriHealth Employee Health will be giving flu shots starting September 28, 2021. Information about times and locations can be found on TriHealth Bridge or from your leader.

THE LAST DAY FLU SHOTS WILL BE GIVEN BY EMPLOYEE HEALTH IS NOVEMBER 5, 2021. The last day to submit your flu vaccine record from a physician's office or another community vendor is November 12, 2021.

Q4: Which vaccine is being provided by TriHealth Employee Health during the 2021-22 seasonal flu vaccination campaign?

A: Employee Health will primarily be providing the standard quadrivalent vaccine preparation. Depending on availability, different manufacturer brands with different components will be used. We will also have a limited supply of Flublok, which is egg-free, for those team members who can only receive an egg-free vaccine due to an egg allergy.

There is a limited number of high-dose influenza vaccine available upon request at Employee Health. Team members over 65 who prefer to receive the high-dose vaccine can also receive them through their own provider network. Flu vaccines must be ordered six months in advance, but what is received is always subject to delays in manufacturing/distribution. The brands we receive are subject to change based on availability.

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Q5: Can I receive the egg-free vaccine from Employee Health due to my vegan dietary preference?

A: No, due to the limited supply of the egg-free vaccine for team members, it is only available to those who cannot take the standard vaccine due to a medical contraindication.

If you want to have an egg-free vaccine only due to dietary preferences, you may get the egg-free vaccine from an outside provider in your health insurance network. You will be required to provide documentation that your vaccine was appropriately received somewhere else.

Q6: What if I don't want to wait until TriHealth has received its vaccine supply and is available for my area?

A: You don't have to wait for TriHealth to provide your vaccination. Some provider offices and clinics will receive their vaccine shipments before others due to differences in manufacturers, distribution, and clinical priority. If you want to get your vaccine sooner than is scheduled for your area, you may get your vaccine from any **outside provider in your health insurance network**. However, you must provide documentation that your vaccine was appropriately received somewhere else.

Q7: Should I get the flu vaccine that has a "high dose" or made with adjuvant if I am over 65?

A: You should discuss whether a higher potency vaccine is appropriate for you with your primary care provider. The benefit and risk of the higher potency vaccine is still under investigation and has not been advised by the CDC as necessary for older adults. There is a limited number of high-dose influenza vaccine available upon request at Employee Health.

Q8: Will the egg-free vaccine be available during all flu vaccination sessions?

A: No. Due to the limited supply, the egg-free vaccine can only be given by appointment in one of the TriHealth Employee Health offices.

Q9: Do I have to provide documentation if I was vaccinated by my primary care physician (PCP) or a non-TriHealth source?

A: Yes, you must provide documentation of your vaccination by November 12, 2021, to TriHealth Employee Health if you were vaccinated by a non-TriHealth source or by your primary care physician, even if your physician is in the TriHealth Healthcare System.

Submit your flu vaccination documentation using the link on Bridge.

Q10: If I submitted documentation for a medical or religious signed declination last flu season or for the COVID-19 requirement, do I need to submit documentation again this year if I am declining the vaccine for the same reason?

A: You need to complete the declination form every year you are declining the flu vaccine, even for the same reason. Team members are encouraged to consult with their medical providers to determine if there may be a current preparation of the flu vaccine that they may be able to take safely.

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Q11: How do I submit my documentation to request approval for a medical or religious declination?

A: Team members should complete a TriHealth 2021-22 Flu Shot Campaign Medical or Religious Declination Form (“declination form”), which can be found on TriHealth Bridge.

- Use the appropriate form for the declination: medical reason or religious reason.
- Clearly print your name, team member ID number, date of birth, phone number, and department.
- Sign the declination form.
- Submit the declination form with the medical or religious documentation for approval by October 29, 2021, according to the instructions on the form:
 - Medical Declination: email the form to FluDocumentation@TriHealth.com.
 - Religious Declination: email the form to HRBP@Trihealth.com.
- Keep a copy for your records.

Q12: What if I don’t want to get the flu shot or wear the surgical mask?

A: Team members who decline the seasonal flu shot and refuse to wear the surgical mask will not be allowed to work. They will be placed on unpaid administrative leave for 60 days. If you have not received your flu vaccine or approved declination by December 31, 2021, your non-compliance will be accepted as your voluntary resignation.

Q13: What is the last day of employment for team members who fail to obtain the flu vaccination (and have not received an approved declination)?

A: Team members who have not received a flu vaccination, an approved declination by November 12, 2021, will be placed on unpaid administrative leave until December 31, 2021. If they do not comply with the flu vaccine process by December 31, 2021, we will accept their non-compliance as a voluntary resignation.

Q14: What is the flu season duration?

A: The flu season duration is from December 16, 2021, through March 31, 2022, unless the presence of flu is found in the community before December 16, 2021, or continues after March 31, 2022.

Q15: How long are the flu vaccines active?

A: Flu vaccines are active for the entire flu season.

Q16: Since we are receiving the flu vaccine in October and November, will it need to be repeated since the flu season runs through March?

A: The vaccine will not need to be repeated since it is active for the entire season.

Q17: Can my family also get a seasonal flu shot through TriHealth Employee Health?

A: Due to our supply, we provide the flu vaccine only to our team members. We encourage family members to see their primary care providers or other sources to obtain the flu vaccine.

Q18: When and where are seasonal flu shots available through TriHealth Employee Health?

A: The flu shot schedule is on TriHealth Bridge.

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Q19: Is the “nasal spray” flu vaccine (Flumist) acceptable for this season?

A: Yes, the Flumist vaccine is approved for use in the 2021-22 flu season for ages 2-49 years; however, the Flumist vaccine will not be available from the Employee Health Department. If you receive the Flumist elsewhere, please be certain to provide the required documentation to TriHealth Employee Health.

Q20: Can I get the flu vaccine if I am allergic to eggs?

A: Yes, you may safely receive a flu vaccine containing no egg protein if you are not allergic to any other vaccine components. TriHealth will have a limited supply of an “egg-free” vaccine (Flublok).

MASK INFORMATION

Q21: When must I wear a surgical mask?

A: Team members who have an approved medical or religious reason for not getting the flu vaccine will need to wear a surgical mask when within 6 feet of patients if they are not already required to wear a mask for COVID-19 or any other infection control precautions, starting when TriHealth determines that flu season visitor restrictions are required and continuing until these restrictions are removed.

Q22: What about unimmunized (did not receive a flu shot) team members who are on the units but do not have direct contact with patients? Will they need to wear a mask?

A: Any team member with a medical or religious reason who does not receive the flu vaccine must wear a surgical mask within 6 feet of patients if they are not already required to wear a mask for COVID-19 or any other infection control precautions. Also, all team members should practice good hand hygiene, along with respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.

Q23: Which masks are needed for team members who cannot be immunized (get the flu shot)?

A: Team members unable to be immunized for medical or other reasons are required to wear a ***surgical mask*** within 6 feet of patients if they are not already required to wear a mask for COVID-19 or any other infection control precautions.

Q24: How frequently should surgical masks be changed?

A: Surgical masks must be changed if they get wet, dirty or contaminated. How often you must replace a clean surgical mask will depend on the supply available during the Covid-19 pandemic. If there is a serious shortage of surgical masks, it may be necessary to wear a surgical mask for more prolonged periods than normal. Your supervisor will be able to tell you how often you may replace your mask, depending on current supplies. If there is any doubt about the condition of your mask, it should be replaced as soon as possible.

Q25: Are front desk staff who greet and/or discharge patients required to wear a surgical mask if they do not receive the flu vaccine?

A: Any team member with a medical or other reason who does not receive the flu vaccine must wear a surgical mask within 6 feet of patients if they are not already required to wear a mask for COVID-19 or any other infection control precautions. This applies to both clinical and non-clinical team members

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who come within close proximity to patients. Surgical masks are to be worn under these circumstances for the duration of the flu season.

Q26: Are students, vendors, and contractors supposed to get a flu shot or wear a mask like all other team members?

A: Anyone issued a TriHealth badge must follow the same flu vaccination requirements as TriHealth team members.

Q27: What about new team members?

A: The HR Talent Acquisition team will inform the candidate of our flu vaccine requirement. The candidate can bring evidence of receiving a flu vaccine to Employee Health before their corporate orientation day.

The new team member may start working after receiving their flu vaccine. They must wear a surgical mask within 6 feet of patients if they are not already required to wear a mask for COVID-19 or any other infection control precautions while building their flu immunity.

If the team member is approved for a medical or religious declination, they must wear a surgical mask within 6 feet of patients if they are not already required to wear a mask for COVID-19 or any other infection control precautions. The declination must be submitted and approved before their corporate orientation date.

If the team member does not submit documentation, have an approved declination, or receive the vaccine before their orientation date, their offer of employment will be rescinded, and they will not be permitted to attend orientation or start working.

Q28: What about team members returning from a pre-approved Medical or other Non-Flu Administrative LOA?

A: Team members scheduled to return from a pre-approved Medical or other Non-Flu Administrative leave of absence during flu season must contact Employee Health before their return for Employee Health to update the team member's flu vaccine status.

If the team member received or receives the flu vaccine after December 15, 2021, the team member must wear a surgical mask when within 6 feet of patients, if they are not already required to wear a mask for COVID-19 or any other infection control precautions, for the two-week (14 days) period of building flu immunity.

Q29: What about team members returning from unpaid Administrative Leave?

A: Team members will only be able to return from their unpaid administrative leave once they comply with the Flu vaccine requirement or receive an approved medical or religious declination.

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GENERAL FLU INFORMATION

Q31: Where can I get more information about the Flu and the Flu vaccine?

A: The CDC website has the latest information about the 2021-22 flu season and the flu vaccinations. It is updated regularly as the season progresses, and you can even sign up to get updates sent to you automatically. Visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>.

Q32: How can I prevent the transmission of all respiratory infections in healthcare settings, including flu?

A: There are many ways to help prevent the spread of respiratory infections, including:

- Practice good hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette.
- Contain respiratory secretions by covering your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing.
- Perform hand hygiene after having contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects/materials.
- Provide tissues and no-touch receptacles for used tissue disposal.
- Provide conveniently located dispensers of alcohol-based hand rub. At sinks, ensure that supplies for hand washing are consistently available.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. They hold the most germs, and they are the easiest path for germs to enter the body.
- Observe Droplet Precautions (i.e., wearing a surgical mask when within 6 feet of patients, if you are not already required to wear a mask for COVID-19 or any other infection control precautions), in addition to standard precautions, when examining a patient with symptoms of a respiratory infection, particularly if fever is present.

Q33: What do I do if I get sick with the flu?

A: If you are sick with the flu, you should:

- Stay home from work or school.
- Get lots of rest, drink plenty of liquids, and avoid running errands when you are sick.
- Take over-the-counter (OTC) medications to relieve the symptoms of flu. (Never give aspirin to children or teenagers who have flu-like symptoms, particularly fever.)
- Consult your doctor early on for the best treatment and/or if your symptoms do not improve and/or become worse.
 - Serious illness from flu is more likely in people age 65 years and older, pregnant women, people with certain chronic medical conditions, and young children.
 - Antiviral drugs may be prescribed by your physician soon after you get sick (within two days of the start of symptoms).
- Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. They hold the most germs, and they are the easiest path for germs to enter the body.
- Do not return to work until at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever (temperature >100°F) without the use of fever-reducing medicines.

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Q34: If I cannot work because I have the flu, is the lost work time covered by FMLA protection?

A: Team members who are otherwise eligible for FMLA protection must use FMLA time if you cannot work more than three days, you have medical complications of the flu, or if you are hospitalized due to the flu. In all cases, your treating physician must provide the required documentation to the Leave of Absence team.

FLU AND COVID-19*

Q35: What is the difference between Influenza (Flu) and COVID-19?

A: Influenza (Flu) and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but different viruses cause them. COVID-19 is caused by infection with a new coronavirus (called SARS-CoV-2), and flu is caused by infection with [influenza viruses](#). Because some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, it may be hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone, and testing may be needed to help confirm a diagnosis. Flu and COVID-19 share many characteristics, but there are some critical differences between the two.

Q36: Will there be flu along with COVID-19 in the fall and winter?

A: While it's not possible to say with certainty what will happen in the fall and winter, CDC believes it's likely that flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both be spreading. In this context, getting a flu vaccine will be more important than ever. CDC recommends that all people six months and older get a yearly flu vaccine.

Q37: Can I have flu and COVID-19 at the same time?

A: Yes. It is possible to have flu and other respiratory illnesses and COVID-19 at the same time. Health experts are still studying how common this can be. Some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are [similar](#), making it hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. Diagnostic [testing](#) can help determine if you are sick with the flu or COVID-19.

Q38: Will a flu vaccine protect me against COVID-19?

A: Getting a flu vaccine will not protect against COVID-19; however, flu vaccination has many other important [benefits](#). Flu vaccines have been shown to reduce the risk of flu illness, hospitalization, and death. Getting a flu vaccine this fall will be more crucial than ever, not only to reduce your risk from flu but also to help conserve potentially scarce healthcare resources.

Q39: Does a flu vaccination increase your risk of getting COVID-19?

A: There is no evidence that getting a flu vaccination increases your risk of getting sick from a coronavirus, like the one that causes COVID-19.

Q40: Can the flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine be given at the same time?

A: Yes, the flu vaccine can be given any time before or after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. If they are given at the same time, they should be administered in separate arms.

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RELATED INFORMATION

Q41: Are we placing alcohol hand cleansers at the entrances and encouraging visitors to use them before visiting?

A: Respiratory etiquette stations are placed at critical high-volume entry points at the hospitals.

Q42: Will we be enforcing proper handwashing protocols?

A: We all should be following proper handwashing procedures all the time, and we should kindly remind each other that this is an essential practice.

Q43: Who should I contact if I have another question?

A: Please talk to your leader.

*Resource:

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 1600 Clifton Road, Atlanta, GA 30333, USA
1 800 CDC INFO (1 800 232 4636); TTY: (888) 232 6348; 24 Hours/ Day – cdcinfo@cdc.gov
For more information, go to www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm*