

Frequently Asked Questions about VUMC's COVID-19 Vaccine Requirements

Question	Answer
<p>Why is VUMC requiring all employees to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?</p>	<p>Vaccination against serious communicable diseases is a long-standing VUMC practice. Much like prior vaccination requirements for flu and other infectious diseases, vaccination is especially important to minimize the risk of COVID-19 in the VUMC community, particularly for patients and coworkers who cannot mount a strong response to vaccination themselves.</p>
<p>When do I need to get my COVID-19 vaccination?</p>	<p>Full vaccination is accomplished by receiving two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or one dose of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, or a World Health Organization approved COVID-19 vaccine. Employees notified by Occupational Health will be required to be fully vaccinated or have an approved exemption by September 30, 2021. Those identified as leaders must be <u>fully</u> vaccinated or have received an approved vaccination exemption before September 15th.</p>
<p>Why is this being put in place prior to the vaccine's approval by the FDA?</p>	<p>Throughout the clinical trials and administration, the vaccines have proven to be extremely effective and safe. To date, COVID-19 vaccines have been administered to more than 171 million Americans – more than half the country – and the number increases each day. The currently authorized vaccines have very similar safety profiles to other required vaccines, and they are as or more effective than other required vaccines.</p>
<p>How can I get a COVID-19 vaccination?</p>	<p>All employees at VUMC who have not been fully vaccinated for COVID-19 will be notified by Occupational Health through VUMC email that they are due for COVID-19 service.</p>
<p>I have already been fully vaccinated; how do I report that to gain compliance?</p>	<p>Employees can go to the Occupational Health Website and click on the link titled "Report a COVID-19 vaccine received outside the OHC vaccination program" on that page to report the vaccination. You can also submit your COVID-19 vaccine documentation by completing a redcap survey at: COVID Vaccine Documentation</p>
<p>I have already had COVID-19. Why do I need to be vaccinated?</p>	<p>Even if you have had COVID-19 you need to be fully vaccinated. Recent studies have shown that after natural infection or after incomplete vaccination (receiving only 1 of 2 doses of an mRNA vaccine), persons do not develop a protective level of antibodies against the delta variant. Only persons who were fully vaccinated developed protective levels of antibodies to ward off the delta variant. In addition, unvaccinated persons have over 2 times the risk of a reinfection compared to those who have had COVID-19 and have also gotten vaccinated.</p>
<p>What happens if I don't comply with getting a COVID-19 vaccine?</p>	<p>All employees who have not been fully vaccinated for COVID-19 will be contacted through VUMC email by Occupational Health that they are not in compliance. If they remain out of compliance by the deadline, their home department leader will be notified regarding next steps. For all employees</p>

	the initial step will include deactivation of access to VUMC systems. After that, staff actions will include unpaid leave and potentially termination of employment. Faculty and House staff will include processes initiated under the relevant Faculty or House Staff Manual.
Do I have to take time off from work to get my COVID-19 vaccination?	In most cases, employees can find an appropriate time to obtain their vaccination. During work hours this may include a walk-in vaccination by Occupational Health in the E-pod Break room, located in area outside Medical Center East main entrance, or in the Occupational Health Clinic on the 6 th floor in Medical Arts Building. Also, you can schedule your vaccine in other VUMC locations or non-VUMC locations to find the best time and location that works for you.
If I experience side effects from the vaccine and need to miss work, do I need to use my paid time off?	As for any illness, you can utilize your PTO or sick time if you are unable to report to work.
How will I be notified that I am not in compliance with COVID-19 vaccination requirement?	Occupational Health will contact non-compliant employees via email informing them they have an immunization that is due. Information for managers about immunization compliance for their direct reports will be reported through the Immunization Compliance Portal beginning Friday August 13. This portal will thereafter be updated twice weekly.
I am working remotely. Do I need to be vaccinated?	Yes. COVID-19 vaccination will be a condition of employment by VUMC, regardless of where you work.
Is COVID-19 going to be an annual vaccination requirement? Do I need a booster shot?	It is still too early to know whether a booster shot will be needed. Currently utilized vaccines are still highly protective against the delta variant, especially in preventing severe illness from this variant.
Are there any exemptions to the vaccine requirement?	Yes. Consistent with our practice for other vaccines, employees will be able to request an exemption from the COVID-19 vaccine requirement for medical reasons and religious /spiritual/deeply held beliefs. You can submit an exemption request at Exemption Request .
I have a new employee who is starting soon, do they need to get their COVID vaccine before they start?	New employees will be encouraged to be vaccinated prior to their start date. If a new employee is not fully vaccinated before their start date, like all other immunizations, they will be required to begin their vaccination process within 30 days of their hire date with compliance in the complete series according to the appropriate vaccination timing guidelines. If a new hire has documentation of having received the COVID vaccine prior to starting, they can submit their documentation online to Occupational Health or at All Aboard during new hire orientation. If a new hire is not yet fully vaccinated, then they can receive their first or second dose through Occupational Health or a VUMC location providing COVID vaccine. All new hires working remotely are also required to meet this requirement.
How is the exemption process handled?	Just as for flu vaccination, a committee will review and consider exemption requests. The employee will receive notice via email that their exemption has

	<p>been approved or denied and any required next steps. Managers will be able to view their team members' compliance in the Immunization Compliance portal. The Committee meets on a regular basis and will review exemption requests in as short of timeframe as possible.</p>
<p>How can VUMC require the vaccine as a condition of employment while it is still under Emergency Use Authorization (EUA)?</p>	<p>Employers are not prevented from requiring COVID-19 vaccination for employees while the vaccine is in EUA status. The Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Commission has issued guidance indicating that employers can require COVID vaccination notwithstanding the EUA status. Numerous other academic medical centers and health systems have also moved to a policy similar to VUMC's.</p>
<p>How do I know if others are vaccinated? Is it a violation of HIPAA to ask if someone is vaccinated?</p>	<p>Employees should not take it upon themselves to enforce the requirement with co-workers or colleagues. It is generally not proper to ask another person about whether they have received the vaccine. Like the flu shot requirement, managers of people may receive compliance reports on their employees' COVID-19 status and may be allowed to speak with employees privately to help enforce the vaccine requirement process.</p>
<p>Once I am fully vaccinated, can I stop wearing a mask around other people?</p>	<p>No, as of August 10th masking guidance, masking is required in all areas of Vanderbilt University Medical Center, including all clinical, non-clinical, research and public areas. Examples of areas where masks are required include common public areas such as cafeterias and food courts, break rooms, research labs, conference rooms, bathrooms, elevators and waiting rooms.</p> <p>Masks may be removed <u>ONLY</u> if a person is sitting in their assigned workspace <u>AND</u> can maintain at least 6 feet of distance from all others. Examples of areas where masks can be removed are offices, cubicles, lab benches and desks.</p>
<p>I have already received a religious/deeply held personal belief exemption from the flu vaccine. Do I need to apply again for an exemption to the COVID-19 vaccine policy?</p>	<p>Yes, you will need to submit a separate immunization exemption request for the COVID-19 immunization.</p>
<p>Who can receive a medical exemption?</p>	<p>Medical exemptions from the COVID-19 vaccination requirement will be allowed only for individuals with a contraindication – or a recognized condition that serves as a reason to not receive the vaccine. This applies to individuals with a documented history of anaphylaxis (life-threatening allergic reaction) or an immediate allergic reaction after a single dose of any of the two-dose vaccines, as well as individuals who developed a rare, severe adverse reaction that has been medically documented by a healthcare provider. In addition, time-limited medical exemptions will be considered for individuals who are currently pregnant, who received a COVID-19</p>

	monoclonal antibody treatment for acute COVID-19 illness, and other conditions on a case-by-case basis.
If an employee already had COVID-19, can they choose to get only one vaccination shot?	Due to the serious health risks associated with the virus and because people can be diagnosed with COVID-19 more than once, everyone is advised to get a full dose of COVID-19 vaccine even if they have already been sick with COVID-19. In this context a full dose means having received two injections of a two-dose vaccine or one injection of a single-dose vaccine. Currently, experts do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. The protection someone gains from having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person. Evidence suggests natural immunity may not last long in some people. In addition, data have emerged that protection against the Delta variant of COVID-19 is not present after natural infection while those who are fully vaccinated do mount protective antibodies against this emerging strain.