Denver Health Mandatory Vaccine Policy FAQ

** Please note that information about COVID-19 vaccines is changing rapidly. Please check back often for updates and additional information. We will continue to make updates as more information is available. Thank you. **

Why is Denver Health requiring employees to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

The risk of contracting COVID-19 for unvaccinated individuals remains high. While a majority of Denver Health's staff members have received the vaccine, mandatory vaccine is necessary to protect against transmission of COVID-19 and to achieve our goal of preventing harm to staff members, patients, students, volunteers, visitors, and community.

Are other local healthcare facilities requiring employees to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, all Colorado healthcare facilities are required by state rule to have employees fully vaccinated.

If I am healthy, why do I need to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Vaccination protects against both asymptomatic and symptomatic COVID-19 infection. Therefore, vaccination not only protects individuals from getting sick but also prevents transmission of the virus to their families, co-workers and patients.

I wear a mask when I'm working. Isn't that enough protection?

No. Wearing a mask helps reduce the spread of the virus, but vaccination is more effective. Being vaccinated means you are protected even when you are not wearing a mask.

Is it safe to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. All COVID-19 vaccines under Food and Drug Administration (FDA) emergency use authorization (EUA) have similar safety profiles to vaccines that are currently fully FDA-approved. These safety profiles have been characterized in efficacy trials and effectiveness studies as well as post-administration surveillance systems.

How effective is the COVID-19 vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccines available in the United States have high efficacy in preventing symptomatic and asymptomatic COVID-19 infection, and even higher efficacy in preventing severe COVID-19 disease, hospitalization, and death.

Does the COVID-19 vaccine work against variants?

Among the currently known and circulating COVID-19 variants, the COVID-19 vaccines appear to be very effective in preventing symptomatic illness and have an even higher effectiveness in preventing severe disease.

If I am breastfeeding, do I need to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends that lactating individuals be vaccinated for COVID-19. The current safety data on the use of COVID-19 vaccine does not indicate any safety concerns to breastfeeding infants.

If I am pregnant, should I receive a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. Pregnancy is a risk factor for severe COVID-19 disease, and there is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccination is harmful to you or to your baby. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and the CDC both recommend that pregnant women receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

Where can I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccines are available at multiple Denver Health locations, as well as at multiple locations in the community.

How much does a COVID-19 vaccine cost?

COVID-19 vaccines are provided free of charge.

Do off-site employees and contractors need to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, the COVID-19 vaccine is required for all employees and contractors, even those working off-site.

Do volunteers need to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, the COVID-19 vaccine is required for all volunteers.

Do students need to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, the COVID-19 vaccine is required for all students.

If I choose not to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, what will happen?

Employees who applied and received an approved declination (medical and or religious) will be allowed to continue to work with extra COVID-19 prevention measures such as wearing a mask at work at all times except when you are in a closed room by yourself or when you are actively eating/drinking. There will also be additional guidance regarding quarantine after exposure and potential testing requirements. If your request for exemption is not approved, then you will need to receive the vaccine or be subject to the termination of your employment on Nov 1, 2021.

How do I apply for a medical declination for the COVID-19 vaccine?

We will have a form available for medical declinations. These are evaluated by Infectious Diseases and COSH physicians.

How do I apply for a religious declination for the COVID-19 vaccine?

We will have a form available for religious declinations. These are evaluated by a multidisciplinary team of leaders at our institution.

If I receive a medical or religious declination for the COVID-19 vaccine, do I need to wear a mask inside the hospital or in my clinic?

Yes. If you are not fully vaccinated for COVID-19, you must wear a mask when you are in any public area.

Which COVID-19 vaccines are accepted by Denver Health?

Denver Health will accept any vaccine that is approved by the WHO emergency use listing. This includes the Moderna, Pfizer, and J&J vaccines that are currently in use in the United States.

How can I provide proof of vaccination?

You have many options for providing proof of vaccination. Please visit https://covid19tracker/ from a Denver Health workstation to provide proof of vaccination.

If I had a reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine, should I get another one?

If you received the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine and had a reaction, you should consult with your primary care provider to determine if it is safe to receive a second vaccine. You can also inquire at COVID-19Info@dhha.org. If your provider recommends against vaccination, you should submit a request for accommodation via the medical declination form.

Will Denver Health require full vaccination, or will one shot be sufficient (if receiving the mRNA vaccine)?

Denver Health will require individuals who choose to get an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) to receive both doses. Individuals who receive only one dose of a two-dose series are not fully protected against COVID-19 and its variants and are not considered "fully vaccinated." Booster shots are available, but currently not a requirement.

I'm already fully vaccinated. Do I need to get a booster COVID-19 vaccine?

Booster shots are also available for the following individuals based on vaccine series:

- Those who received either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine at least 30 days ago AND have a weakened immune system.
- Those who are 65+ and received the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine at least 6 months ago.
- Those who are 18+, received the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine at least 6 months ago, and have medical conditions such as those identified by the CDC.
- Those who are 18+, received the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine at least 6 months ago, and work in settings where large volumes of people are encountered such as healthcare, public transportation, education, restaurants, food services, etc.
- Those who received the Johnson and Johnson vaccine at least 2 months ago.

What is the consequence for not getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

Failure to comply with the policy will be grounds for termination of employment. Employees have until November 1 to comply. After that time, they will be removed from the schedule. They will receive payment only if they are using accrued PTO. Termination will occur on November 15.

Who is held liable for any adverse effects of individuals getting the vaccine?

Injuries from vaccine administration will be treated like any other circumstance in which an employee suffers an injury that occurs in the course and scope of employment. An employee should promptly report the injury and the claim will be reviewed. If it is determined that the injury was caused by the vaccine or administration of the vaccine, then the employee would become eligible for medical and income replacement benefits under worker's compensation.

What if I previously had COVID-19? Do I still need the shot?

You should be vaccinated regardless of whether you already had COVID-19. That's because experts do not yet know how long you are protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. Even if you have already recovered from COVID-19, it is possible—although rare—that you could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 again. Studies have shown that vaccination provides a strong boost in protection in people who have recovered from COVID-19.

How long should I wait before getting the COVID-19 vaccine if I recently had COVID-19 infection?

Natural immunity to COVID-19 lasts for about 90 days. You can receive the vaccine sooner than that time, or your can fill out a medical declination to defer your vaccine to a later date. If you were treated with certain medications for your COVID-19 infection, you may need to wait a month after your infection to receive the vaccine. You should contact COVIDinfo@dhha.org if you have questions.

What is VAERS and how does it track events related to vaccination?

VAERS, which stands for the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System is an American reporting system to keep track of unfavorable or unintended events that take place after vaccination, like a fever or a rash, and that may (or may not) have been caused by the vaccine. Anti-vaxxers routinely publicize

reports from VAERS as if they are proof that a vaccine is causing clear harm. On its own, VAERS cannot be used to conclude anything, but it can tip off experts that a particular safety signal might be real and deserves to be further studied. [1] There have been several misinformation campaigns which are using VAERS data to scare the public about vaccine side effects. The fact remains that the reporting of a death to VAERS indicates nothing about what caused it and there for there have been no indication for deaths that were caused by COVID-19 vaccines.

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[1] https://www.mcgill.ca/oss/article/covid-19-critical-thinking-health/dont-fall-vaers-scare-tactic