

**SEASONAL FLU VACCINATION 2021-2022*****As a health care worker, am I required to be vaccinated against influenza (the flu)?***

The health and well-being of everyone who works at NYP is as much a priority for us as the safety of our patients. Influenza vaccines are safe and effective. NYP team members are encouraged to obtain vaccination against seasonal influenza to promote the safety and well-being of our patients and visitors, our communities, our families, and ourselves. Participation in the NYP Flu Vaccination Program *is* mandatory. ***New York State Department of Health mandate requires all health care personnel to wear a surgical mask. During COVID pandemic period, NYP has also initiated “universal masks on” for all staff. Staff should be wearing a surgical mask at all times while at work, except when otherwise indicated by a personal protective equipment (PPE) protocol, or when eating with social distancing or when alone in a room.*** All physicians, employees and volunteers are required to be vaccinated by **January 12, 2021**.

***Where can I get the flu vaccine?***

Workforce Health & Safety (WHS) is providing the seasonal flu vaccine free of charge to all employees, physicians and volunteers. You may get vaccinated at specially scheduled locations and times throughout the hospitals and medical centers, from a Flu Champion, and in central locations throughout the Hospital such as cafeterias and lobbies.

For NYP employees currently enrolled in Aetna medical plan with CVS pharmacy coverage have the following benefit:

- The employees and their dependents (over 18 years old) enrolled in the same insurance plan can receive flu vaccines at CVS or any pharmacy that participates in CVS' network for free. The flu shot age requirement for dependents are established by and can vary by state.
- Bring CVS Caremark Pharmacy Insurance Card to receive the vaccine.
- Submit CVS “Vaccine Consent and Administration Record” form to Workforce Health & Safety via [VaxApp](#).

***What is the policy regarding wearing a surgical mask?***

- The NYS DOH mandate requires all health care personnel to wear a surgical mask. NYP has also initiated “universal masks on” for all staff. Staff should be wearing a surgical mask at all times while at work, except when otherwise indicated by a PPE protocol, or when eating with social distancing or when alone in a room.

- Surgical masks will be available at all Hospital entry areas and in clinical areas.
- Masks should be changed whenever it is soiled or might have become soiled, or if it becomes moist.
- N-95 masks are not needed to comply with this policy and should not be used for this purpose

***What will happen when an employee refuses to wear a mask while at work?***

Compliance with this policy is mandatory, and non-compliance will result in corrective action. Managerial and Security staff will monitor mask use in the designated areas.

***How will the Hospital identify whether or not someone is vaccinated?***

Compliance and vaccination will be documented and maintained by WHS. Compliance and vaccination can also be viewed by an employee's manager through WorkDay.

***Do I need to do anything else if I need a medical or religious exemption to vaccination?***

Personnel who are seeking an exemption from receiving the vaccine based on a medical contraindication or a religious reason are required to submit an exemption request form via [VaxApp](#). Medical contraindications must be documented and are reviewed by Workforce Health and Safety.

***If I am granted a medical or religious exemption for vaccination and work in a non-clinical area where there are no patients, do I have to wear a surgical mask?***

Yes. Universal masking is in effect throughout the hospital and medical center.

***What should I do if I have a medical contraindication to the flu vaccine?***

Employees with a medical contraindication or precautions to the vaccine must provide documentation from their allergist or an appropriate specialist to WHS via [VaxApp](#).

Contraindications to all influenza vaccines include the following:

- Severe allergic reaction after a previous dose or to a vaccine component.

Precautions to all influenza vaccines include the following:

- History of Guillain Barré Syndrome.
- Current moderate or severe acute illness with or without fever (until symptoms have abated).

The following are not considered contraindications to influenza vaccination:

- Minor acute illness (e.g., diarrhea and minor upper respiratory tract illnesses, including otitis media).

- Mild to moderate local reactions and/or low-grade or moderate fever following a prior dose of the vaccine.
- Sensitivity to a vaccine component (e.g., upset stomach, soreness, redness, itching, swelling at the injection site).
- Current antimicrobial therapy.
- Disease exposure or convalescence.
- Pregnant or immunosuppressed person in the household.
- Breastfeeding.
- Family history.
- Any condition which is itself an indication for influenza vaccination.

(New York State Department of Health Influenza Vaccine Medical Exemption Statement for Health Care Personnel: <https://www.health.ny.gov/forms/doh-4482.pdf> ; last accessed 9/30/21)

WHS can refer you for allergy testing if needed. Many people who have a history of egg allergy in childhood can safely receive the flu vaccine. This will be determined by an allergist. WHS also has egg-free flu vaccines; if interested, please contact Workforce Health & Safety.

***If I received the flu vaccine somewhere other than Workforce Health & Safety, do I need to do anything?***

If you were vaccinated for influenza elsewhere, you are required to notify WHS of outside vaccination by submitting official documentation via [VaxApp](#) that includes the name and signature of the licensed healthcare practitioner who administered the vaccine, the date of vaccination, specific vaccine formulation and its dose that was administered. View detailed instructions for submitting [Influenza Vaccine Outside Documentation](#). WHS will provide a sticker for your ID.

**If a person did not receive an influenza vaccine but already had influenza this influenza season, is that person still required to wear a mask?**

Yes. Universal masking is in effect throughout the hospital and medical center.

**It takes one to two weeks after vaccination to develop protective immunity. Do I need to wear a mask during this period?**

Yes. Universal masking is in effect throughout the hospital and medical center.

**Do staff members who routinely interact with personnel who could potentially expose patients to influenza but who don't meet such criteria themselves need to wear a mask?**

Yes. Universal masking is in effect throughout the hospital and medical center.

***Why do I need to be vaccinated for the flu every year?***

A flu vaccine is needed every year because flu viruses are constantly changing and it is not unusual for new flu viruses to appear each year. The flu vaccine is formulated each year to keep up with the flu viruses as they change. Also, studies have shown that the body's immunity to influenza viruses either through natural infection or vaccination declines over time. Getting vaccinated each year provides the best protection against influenza throughout flu season.

***Is the flu vaccine safe?***

Yes. The flu vaccine is made from inactive virus, so you cannot get the flu from being vaccinated. Side effects, when they occur, are generally mild and may include arm soreness or mild fever for one to two days. Allergic reactions and other complications are very rare.

***Can I receive the intranasal vaccine, FluMist®, for seasonal flu instead of an injection?***

Yes, FluMist®, is acceptable as vaccination for seasonal flu. However, Workforce Health & Safety will not be administering FluMist® at NYP.

***Will the Hospital be offering the high dose or adjuvanted flu vaccine?***

The high dose or adjuvanted flu vaccine for those 65 years old and above may become available this season depending on its supply; if interested, please contact Workforce Health & Safety.

***Will the Hospital insurance plan cover the cost of flu shots for family members?***

For NYP employees currently enrolled in Aetna medical plan with CVS pharmacy coverage now have the following benefit:

- The employees and their dependents (over 18 years old) enrolled in the same insurance plan can receive flu vaccines at CVS for free. Eligibility for dependents under age 18 vary by state; confirm with the CVS/pharmacy.
- Bring CVS Caremark Pharmacy Insurance Card to receive the vaccine.

**IF YOU DEVELOP FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS**

***What are the symptoms of developing flu?***

Generally, the symptoms are a fever of greater than 100°F (37.80°C), plus a cough or sore throat. Fatigue and body aches are also common. Influenza may also present as pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), or respiratory distress.

***If I only have mild symptoms, can I still report to or remain at work?***

No. Influenza is very contagious, and if you work while you are sick there is a high risk that patients and co-workers will be exposed.

***What should I do if I develop flu-like symptoms at work?***

You should immediately put on a surgical mask, report to your manager or supervisor, and call Workforce Health & Safety Hotline 646-697-9470 for COVID testing since COVID and flu share similar symptoms. You should also call your personal physician if you are concerned about symptoms.

***What happens if I develop flu-like symptoms at work and Workforce Health & Safety is closed during my shift?***

You should immediately put on a surgical mask and report to your manager, who will send you home. You are required to call WHS Hotline 646-697-9470 the next business day, to provide symptom checks and direction. Follow your departmental procedure for notification in the event of absence from work. If you are concerned about your symptoms, call your personal physician.

***What should I do if I develop flu-like symptoms while I am not at work?***

Call your manager, who will instruct you to stay home and call WHS Hotline 646-697-9470 to provide symptom checks and receive direction. Follow your departmental procedure for notification in the event of absence from work. If you are concerned about your symptoms, call your personal physician.

***Is there a procedure I should follow when I am ready to return to work?***

All employees recovered from influenza must be cleared by WHS Hotline 646-697-9470 before returning to work, regardless of the number of days they were out sick.

***What should I do if I am exposed to influenza?***

If you are **at work** and exposed to influenza, inform your manager, who will notify Infection Prevention & Control. They will determine if it is an exposure that places you at risk and get back to your manager. If it is a true exposure, you will receive direction on what to do next.

If you are **outside of work** and exposed to a confirmed influenza, consult your physician. Influenza-exposed employees may continue working as long as they remain symptom-free.

***If I develop influenza and am prescribed Tamiflu, is this medication covered under a prescription plan?***

For NYP employees participating in the Caremark prescription plan, Tamiflu is available with a co-pay if your primary care doctor prescribes it to you.

**FURTHER QUESTIONS:** e-mail [fluquestions@nyp.org](mailto:fluquestions@nyp.org)