As a health care worker, am I required to be vaccinated against influenza (the flu)?

Participation in the NYP Flu Vaccination Program is mandatory as all employees need to either receive the vaccination or have an approved exemption. **Declination will be allowed for medical or religious reasons** and any requests for declination will be reviewed. **The New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) is requiring any health care worker who declines the vaccination to wear 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.** All physicians, employees and volunteers are required to decide whether to be vaccinated and to document the decision by November 9, 2020.

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

Workforce Health & Safety 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 for free.
- Bring CVS Caremark Pharmacy Insurance Card to receive the vaccine.
- Submit CVS “Vaccine Consent and Administration Record” form to Workforce Health & Safety.

**Why is the NYS DOH requiring masking for unvaccinated health care workers?**

The masking requirement is intended to protect patients from acquiring influenza from infected health care workers. Influenza can be severe and cause death in persons with underlying medical conditions. There is a large body of evidence that health care workers can pose a risk to patients by transmitting influenza infection.

**What is the policy regarding wearing a surgical mask if I decide not to be vaccinated?**

- 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 WH&S. Compliance and vaccination can also be viewed by an employee’s manager through Workday. Employees and volunteers who are on site and vaccinated will have a flu sticker affixed to their ID badge.

**Do I need to do anything else if I decide to decline vaccination?**

Declination will be allowed for medical or religious reasons and any requests for declination will be reviewed. Beginning October 12, an employee who wishes to decline the flu vaccine will need to complete a flu vaccine declination attestation request located on the WHS Infonet page. If the request is approved, the employee will be granted access to the online training. Employees need to complete BOTH the attestation and the online training to be compliant.

If you do not have a CWID and do not have access to the NYP Learning Center, you can receive the appropriate declination attestation by contacting your WHS clinic. If approved, you will be given an educational pamphlet in WH&S that you must read.

**If I decline 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 to the vaccine must provide documentation to WH&S. Medical contraindications are one of the following:

- severe allergy to chicken eggs
• history of severe reaction to flu vaccine in the past
• history of having had Guillain-Barre syndrome within 6 weeks of having received the flu vaccine

This documentation will be reviewed by WH&S. 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.

_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 WH&S of outside vaccination by submitting official documentation 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. If needed, you can also click [Influenza Vaccine Outside Documentation](#), which can be brought to WHS to receive 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 flu vaccine?

The high dose flu vaccine for those >65 years old 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.
- Bring CVS Caremark Pharmacy Insurance Card to receive the vaccine.
- Submit CVS “Vaccine Consent and Administration Record” form to Workforce Health & Safety to receive flu sticker for NYP ID card.

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 WH&S 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 WH&S 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 WH&S 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