



TO: Adventist HealthCare Employees and Physicians
FROM: Terry Forde, President and CEO, Adventist HealthCare
DATE: Aug. 6, 2021
SUBJECT: COVID-19 Vaccination Deadline & Masking Update

Vaccine. Last month, we shared that Adventist HealthCare's (AHC) timeline for requiring COVID-19 vaccinations would be informed by the impact of variants. Adventist HealthCare leaders have been closely monitoring the spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19. This highly contagious strain is now responsible for close to 100% of all new COVID-19 cases in the Maryland and a nationwide jump in new infections and hospitalizations. Nearly all these cases are among the unvaccinated. Over the last two weeks, infection prevention leaders have grown increasingly concerned by the spread of the Delta variant, which has the potential to once again impact our community and our health system.

Following recommendations from our Human Resources and Patient Safety leaders and as part of our continued commitment to promote the well-being of our team members, patients and the community, AHC is updating the deadline by which team members must be vaccinated as a condition of employment.

- **New 1st Dose Deadline:** Team members must receive their first shot of a two-dose regimen of COVID-19 vaccine **by noon on Friday, Oct. 1, 2021.**
- **New 2nd Dose Deadline:** Team members must receive their second shot of a two-dose regimen (or the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine) **by noon on Sunday, Oct. 31, 2021.**

Please note that this COVID-19 vaccination requirement applies to all AHC team members, including physicians, students, volunteers, vendors and contract employees providing onsite services at any AHC facility or affiliated location. New hires will continue to be vaccinated against COVID-19 prior to their start. Further details and guidance are included in the updated Frequently Asked Questions document attached.

This update in our policy stems from our continued firm belief that vaccination is our best tool to save lives, protect our communities and reassure patients that they are safe in our care. COVID-19 vaccines have been used across the world in hundreds of millions of people and the success is clear. The COVID-19 vaccines help prevent viral spread, death and hospitalizations.

If you are still weighing your decision, please take the coming days to speak with your physician, talk with colleagues who have been vaccinated or call our Employee Assistance Program at 1-877-252-8550. You can also find links to respected health resources on the science behind the vaccine as well as information on options to obtain your vaccination at [AdventistHealthCare.com/StaffVaccine](https://www.adventisthealthcare.com/StaffVaccine).

Masking and Eye Protection. All clinical facilities and patient-centered locations will continue to follow CDC guidelines around masking and eye protection. Additionally, as positivity rates across the state have risen above 1%, we will resume masking at the Support Center and all non-clinical locations on August 9.

Thank You. Many thanks to all our team members who have already chosen to vaccinate in keeping with the many healthcare systems across Maryland, D.C. and Virginia that have also committed to taking this critical action. Again, we are grateful to you for your support and commitment to best practices in order to promote health and healing in the patients and community we serve.

While the rise in COVID-19 cases around the nation is disheartening, we will not lose courage or hope. Please know that however long our response to the pandemic takes, Adventist HealthCare is committed to supporting your work, keeping you safe and providing you with opportunities for rest and self-care.

COVID-19 Vaccine Requirement Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why do I have to be vaccinated?

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), getting vaccinated is the best step you can take to protect yourself and the people around you from contracting COVID-19. Research has proven that the current vaccines available in the U.S. are safe and effective in preventing COVID-19.

2. When will I have to be vaccinated by?

Adventist HealthCare team members will be required as a condition of employment to receive the first shot of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine by **noon on Oct. 1, 2021**. Second doses or a single dose of Johnson & Johnson vaccine must be completed by **noon on Oct. 31, 2021**.

New Hires: As of July 5, 2021, any new healthcare worker applicant (employee and contingent worker) who is offered employment is required to be fully vaccinated prior to their start date.

3. Who will have to be vaccinated?

The COVID-19 vaccination requirement applies to all Adventist HealthCare employees and healthcare workers including physicians, students, volunteers, vendors and contract employees providing onsite services at any of the Adventist HealthCare and affiliated facilities.

4. Are there any exceptions to the vaccination requirement? What do I need to do to be exempt?

For those with a valid medical vaccine exemption, a healthcare provider-[signed validation form](#) and appropriate documentation must both be submitted, along with an [annual attestation](#).

Appropriate documentation for religious vaccine exemptions includes: (1) a letter from the head of the church or religious institution and (2) published tenets of the faith/church, along with (3) an [annual attestation](#).

Exemption requests will be reviewed/approved by the Human Resources team, and you will be notified if your exemption request was not approved.

Non-vaccinated personnel will be asked to take additional steps to ensure their safety and the health of our patients. Measures may include extra Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements or COVID-19 testing. Job duties may also be adjusted.

Pregnant team members may request a delay in COVID-19 vaccination until they return to work after the birth of their child.

5. What happens if I refuse vaccination?

As a condition of employment, failure to comply with the mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy – unless you have an approved exemption – will result in a five-day suspension, followed by termination, in alignment with the AHC influenza vaccine policy (AHC 2.166 Annual Testing and Vaccination Requirements).

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6. Where can I get vaccinated?

To find vaccination locations closest to you:

- Visit [Coronavirus.Maryland.Gov](https://www.coronavirus.maryland.gov) or [Vaccines.Gov](https://www.vaccines.gov)
- Text your ZIP code to 438829
- Call 1-855-MDGOVAX
- Consider other community resources including county clinics, pharmacies and grocery stores.
- Adventist HealthCare also will host [COVID-19 vaccines clinics for team members](#) at three of our entities beginning Aug. 23, 2021.
- Adventist HealthCare offers COVID-19 vaccinations at the following outpatient locations:
 - [Adventist HealthCare Urgent Care](#) in Rockville
 - [Adventist Medical Group](#) – Physician offices in convenient locations

7. Can I choose which vaccine I get?

Three COVID-19 vaccines are currently authorized in the U.S.: Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna or Johnson & Johnson. You may receive any of these vaccines to fulfill Adventist HealthCare's requirement. Please note that Adventist HealthCare may not know in advance which vaccines will be available at our locations. If you have a preferred vaccine, you may want to seek an appointment at a government-run clinic or retail location to support your preference.

8. I got vaccinated outside of Adventist HealthCare. What do I do?

Send documentation of your vaccination to your entity Occupational Health team. This can be a photo of your CDC vaccination card or documentation of your vaccine printed from the state's online vaccine database, [MD.MyIR.Net](https://www.mdmyir.net). If you have already submitted documentation, review your Occupational Health profile in Workday to confirm that your COVID-19 vaccine is listed.

If you have been vaccinated with Astra Zeneca or vaccines other than those listed in the question above (including Sinopharm, Sinovac and Sputnik V), you meet the requirement. While less is known about the efficacy of these vaccines, the impact of re-vaccination is still being examined and at this time is not advised. However, documented proof of vaccination must still be presented to Occupational Health.

To submit proof of your COVID-19 vaccine to Occupational Health and to update your Workday, please upload your vaccine proof using our internal form here: <https://forms.office.com/r/Z2etDmYQTN> (you must log in using your AHC email) or email your vaccine proof as an attachment to COVID19EmployeeSupport@AdventistHealthCare.com.

9. I got vaccinated at the end of 2020/beginning of 2021. Do I need to be vaccinated again?

As of August 5, 2021, if you have been vaccinated for COVID-19 you do not need to re-vaccinate or receive a booster. We will continue to monitor research as well as the FDA and CDC guidance on the long-term efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines.

10. What if I have side effects after receiving the vaccine?

Side effects vary by individuals. If you have concerns about how the shot may impact you, please consult your primary care physician. You may elect to schedule PTO for the day after your vaccination or receive your vaccine preceding days where you are not scheduled to work.

11. What if I have further questions?

Please reach out to your entity's [Occupational Health](#) representative.