

COVID-19 Vaccine Requirement Q&A for Colleagues

Version #12

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What's changed: Updated text is highlighted.

1. Why is Trinity Health requiring COVID-19 vaccination for all colleagues?

- **Safety is a Core Value of Trinity Health.** That means we do everything we can to protect people. Nothing is more important than the safety of our patients, residents, colleagues, physicians and communities.
- **The science is clear - vaccines save lives.** The COVID-19 vaccine is the single most effective tool in slowing, and even stopping, the spread of COVID-19 and saving lives.
- **It's the right thing to do.** As a health care system and as caregivers, we have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for all (colleagues, patients, communities). We are responsible for doing everything we can to end the pandemic and save lives in our communities. As a Catholic health care system, we pledge to protect the most vulnerable. Young children are increasingly at risk and not eligible for vaccination. More than 10 million people are immunocompromised, and vaccines may not be as effective. We are accountable for protecting everyone around us for the common good.

2. It is legal to make employees get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, it is. State and federal employment laws allow employers to require vaccinations. The annual flu vaccination has been required for all Trinity Health colleagues for several years. There are a few states that do not allow companies to require employees to receive vaccinations; colleagues of Health Ministries in these states are highly encouraged to be vaccinated and should refer to local communications.

3. Why did Trinity Health announce requiring the vaccination before any of the vaccines had permanent U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval?

The vaccines currently approved under the FDA emergency use authorization (EUA) are not experimental and have undergone the most intense safety scrutiny of any vaccines in U.S. history. The FDA approval process for the EUA required that clinical trials be conducted and that the information on safety and efficacy from those clinical trials was thoroughly reviewed BEFORE the EUA was granted. The safety data in those clinical trials has been reinforced with robust surveillance doses administered in the United States since the EUA was granted.

The FDA granted permanent biologic license approval of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for people ages 16 and older on Aug. 23, 2021 and the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine for people 18 and older on Jan. 31, 2022. The vaccines continue to be available under EUA for younger people and for the administration of a third dose in certain immunocompromised individuals. This permanent approval means the vaccine passed numerous, required safety checks including study of all reported side effects and any adverse reactions. Several months of safety data showed the vaccine is safe and effective. Johnson and Johnson (Janssen) earned EUA for its vaccine later than Pfizer and Moderna and has not applied for permanent approval from the FDA.

Trinity Health is requiring the vaccine to protect our patients, residents, colleagues, physicians and communities. We are confident in the available safety data. The vaccines are safe and effective with minimal common side effects and serious complications occurring very rarely. Every death and serious illness is preventable today. As of Feb. 9, 2022, the [CDC reports](#) about 213 million people, or about 64 percent, of the U.S. population is now fully vaccinated against COVID-19. About 42 percent of people in the U.S. who are fully vaccinated had a [booster dose](#).

4. What is the difference between an EUA (emergency use authorization) and BLA (biologic license application), or permanent approval, by the FDA for COVID-19 vaccines?

The FDA requires at least two months of follow-up of trial participants for an EUA, and an additional 4 months of monitoring before a BLA can be granted, and the FDA requires more detailed chemistry, manufacturing, and

control data (including requiring facility inspections) in a BLA submission. Never before in history has data from clinical trials and development for new vaccines or medications been as transparent, or as publicly available, as these vaccines. Our access to the robust safety and efficacy data as part of the FDA approval process for both EUA and BLA, assures us of the safety of these vaccines.

5. If I've already had COVID-19 and have antibodies, why do I need to get vaccinated?

Vaccination produces a higher level of and longer lasting immunity than natural infection. This is uncommon in many illnesses but is true in COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Trinity Health recommend everyone 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. In addition, vaccination protects against the known variants to a greater extent than natural infection. Studies have shown that vaccination provides a strong boost in protection in people who have recovered from COVID-19. Vaccination produces broader protection against variants.

6. If masks work, why do I have to get vaccinated?

Masks are an effective tool in preventing the spread of COVID-19. However, mask wearing is not consistent within our communities and requires all to wear one to have the best protection. Vaccination is much more effective. Masking is still required in all areas where health care services are delivered in accordance with Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), CDC, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements.

7. Why vaccinate when there are effective COVID-19 treatments?

A COVID-related death occurs every 7 minutes in the U.S. on average right now, despite treatments. With proven effective treatments such as remdesivir, polyclonal antibodies, dexamethasone, deaths are still occurring. Treatment will not curb the spread of this virus. Preventing infection with vaccination also prevents long-term complications (Long-haul COVID). We fully support continued research into effective treatments.

8. What is the difference between being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and being up to date with the COVID-19 vaccine?

The CDC defines **fully vaccinated** against COVID-19 as a person has received their primary series of COVID-19 vaccines. People who receive the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine are fully vaccinated two weeks after their final dose in the primary series, and people who receive the Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) COVID-19 vaccine are fully vaccinated two weeks after the first dose. See the [CDC website](#) for primary series details. Many people who are [immunocompromised](#) may need an additional dose as part of their primary vaccine series.

The CDC recommends staying **up to date** with COVID-19 vaccinations, including any additional doses or boosters when eligible, for optimal protection against severe illness and hospitalization from COVID-19. Up to date means a person has received all recommended COVID-19 vaccines, including any booster dose(s) when eligible. A person is considered **boosted and up to date** right after getting their booster dose. Trinity Health colleagues are required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Currently, the booster is not required. However, we recommend you stay up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines, including receiving [the booster](#), for optimal protection.

9. I work remotely. Why do I need to be vaccinated?

As colleagues of a Catholic Health Ministry, we are all care givers. Even though you may work remotely, or in a department with no patient contact, you likely encounter others daily. It is important we all do everything we can to end the pandemic and save lives in our communities.

10. Will I lose my job if I do not get vaccinated?

Yes, COVID-19 vaccination is now a Ministry-wide Trinity Health employment requirement, unless prohibited by state or local regulations. You are required to provide Trinity Health with proof of COVID-19 vaccination or have an approved religious or medical exemption. It is not yet known if a COVID-19 vaccine booster will be required

but if it is, you will be required to submit proof of receiving your booster vaccine (unless you have an approved exemption). Please refer to the COVID-19 vaccine policy and procedure available on your Health Ministry's intranet for details on the ministry-wide process for unfulfilled required actions.

11. How do I submit proof of my vaccination?

Submit your proof of COVID-19 vaccination in the HR4U colleague portal ([HR4U.trinity-health.org](https://hr4u.trinity-health.org)) on a computer or smartphone following this [job aid](#). It takes just a few minutes; you can key the URL into your smartphone web browser and upload a photo of your proof from your photo library. Human Resources will review your submission and approve or deny your request following defined criteria. The team will consult with you if necessary to obtain any additional information needed.

To check your status:

1. Log into the [HR4U colleague portal](#).
2. Click on "My Requests" to view information on open or pending cases or "Closed" to view the approved or denied status of closed cases.

12. I uploaded a photo of my vaccination card in the *Live Your Whole Life* app last year. Do I still need to upload it into HR4U?

Yes. You and your benefits-eligible spouse can earn 2,500 points for uploading your vaccination card to Live Your Whole Life to maintain your medical premium discount.

13. Will spouses or children on your Trinity Health insurance be required to receive the COVID-19 vaccine to maintain a lower premium?

You and your benefits-eligible spouse can earn 2,500 points for uploading your vaccination card to Live Your Whole Life to maintain your medical premium discount.

14. Can I be exempt from having to get the vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccine exemptions will be approved for a medical condition such as an allergy to a vaccine component, or in rare situations for deeply held religious beliefs. You may submit a religious or medical exemption request via the HR4U colleague portal ([HR4U.trinity-health.org](https://hr4u.trinity-health.org)) on a computer or smartphone following [this job aid](#). Exemption requests for medical reasons must include a form completed by a physician available in HR4U. Depending on the type of exemption requested, a committee comprised of HR, Mission and/or Clinical leaders at your Health Ministry or in your region will review your submission and approve or deny your request following defined criteria. The committee will consult with you and Regional Health Ministry leadership to obtain any additional information needed to evaluate your request. An existing approved flu vaccination exemption does not apply to the COVID-19 vaccination; a separate exemption request is required.

15. How can I check the status of my submission in HR4U?

- Look for the email from HR4U indicating that your submission case is closed.
- Log into the [HR4U colleague portal](#).
- Click on "My Requests" to view information on open or pending cases or "Closed" to view the approved or denied status of closed cases.

16. How will I know if my exemption request is denied?

You will receive an email from HR. It may take up to 3 weeks for your request to be reviewed and processed, due to the high volume of submissions.

17. Who reviews the medical or religious exemption requests?

Religious exemption requests are reviewed by a committee comprised of leaders in Mission, HR, and other areas at your Region or Health Ministry. Medical exemption requests are reviewed by a review committee comprised of leaders in clinical, HR and other areas at your Regional Health Ministry. If a committee denies an exemption request, it is then automatically escalated to either the religious or medical review committee at the System Office. The System Office committee will make the final decision to approve or deny the request.

18. If my exemption request is denied, can I appeal the decision?

No, the decision is final after the secondary, System Office-level review.

19. What is the deadline?

Key Dates	Information and Required Action	Affected Audiences
July 8, 2021	COVID-19 Vaccine Requirement effective for all Trinity Health colleagues, clinical staff and business partners	New Hires, Colleagues, Leaders, Medical Staff, Students, Volunteers, Business Partners
August 6, 2021	Deadline for management to submit exemption request via HR4U colleague portal	Colleagues with a Workday management level of manager, director, vice president or senior officer
August 20, 2021	Deadline for colleagues to submit exemption request via HR4U colleague portal	Colleagues with a Workday management level of supervisor, coordinator or any other role
August 24, 2021	Last day for management to receive last dose of vaccine and submit documentation to HR4U	Colleagues with a Workday management level of manager, director, vice president or senior officer
September 21, 2021	Last day for colleagues to receive last dose of vaccine and submit documentation to HR4U Last day for employed medical staff to receive last dose of vaccine Last day for volunteers to receive last dose of vaccine	Colleagues with a Workday management level of supervisor, coordinator, or all other positions

20. Can women who are pregnant or trying to get pregnant request a vaccine deferral?

In October 2021, we announced Trinity Health will no longer offer a COVID-19 vaccine temporary deferral for colleagues who are pregnant or trying to become pregnant, as more data from the CDC became available. Data shows severe risks to pregnant women and their babies when they become sick with COVID-19.

We now know that the risks of COVID-19 outweigh any known or potential risks of vaccination while pregnant or trying to conceive. In fact, the CDC issued a health alert recommending those who are pregnant, recently gave birth, are breast-feeding, or trying to become pregnant receive a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible.

COVID-19 infection in pregnancy:

- Increases the risk of preterm birth
- Increases the risk of baby being admitted to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)
- Increases the risk of stillbirth
- 97% of pregnant women hospitalized with COVID-19 are unvaccinated

Pregnant women who are unvaccinated:

- Are 60% more likely to go into preterm labor
- Have a 70% increased risk of death from COVID-19 illness
- Three times as likely to be admitted to the ICU

Getting vaccinated while pregnant may also help protect your baby against COVID-19. Antibodies in vaccinated (with mRNA vaccines) pregnant persons have been found in their newborns, which will help to protect your baby.

More Information:

- COVID-19 Vaccination & Pregnancy: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html>
- COVID-19 Vaccination Considerations for Obstetric–Gynecologic Care – American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologist: <https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/practice-advisory/articles/2020/12/covid-19-vaccination-considerations-for-obstetric-gynecologic-care>
- Pregnancy and COVID-19 Vaccine: An OB/GYN's personal experience | Saint Joseph Mercy [VIDEO]

21. I'm breastfeeding. Can I request a deferral?

No, there is no concern for women who are vaccinated while breastfeeding as the vaccine is not a live virus and does not shed in breast milk. See the CDC's [COVID-19 Vaccines While Pregnant or Breastfeeding info page](#).

22. I have a documented medical condition. Why was my exemption request denied?

Exemption decisions are based on known COVID-19 vaccine safety risks and adverse events for people with certain medical conditions. It was determined that your medical condition is not a known contraindication for the COVID-19 vaccine. We encourage you to follow up with your medical provider if you have questions about the vaccine and your specific medical condition.

23. Are all Trinity Health ministries following the same timeline?

All Trinity Health ministries will follow the same timeline for leaders and new hires. In some cases, the compliance timeline for colleagues varies slightly based on community needs.

24. What does the vaccine cost?

The COVID-19 vaccine is free to all Americans. Trinity Health colleagues, including those who are insured, will pay nothing if they receive the vaccine at a Trinity Health location or elsewhere. The federal government purchased the vaccine so you and your family should not expect to pay to receive the vaccine no matter where you receive it. However, you will be asked for insurance information upon registration. If you have no insurance, you can still get the vaccine at no cost to you.

25. What if I lost my CDC vaccination card or other proof I was vaccinated?

If you received your vaccine through a health care provider and were registered for its patient portal, your vaccine record may be available through your portal account. If you were vaccinated at a retailer such as Kroger or CVS, contact them to request a copy. If not, contact your state health department for a copy. Each state maintains a vaccination information system.

26. Is the seasonal flu vaccination still required for all colleagues, too?

Yes. Trinity Health colleagues are required to submit proof of their flu vaccine or have an approved medical or religious exemption annually each fall, unless prohibited by state or local regulation.

27. Will I be allowed paid time off to get the vaccine?

Most of our work locations have vaccine clinics. We will do our best to schedule you during work hours. If you are a non-exempt colleague and need to take time off during your work day, you may be eligible for up to 4 hours of paid time. You will be expected to work with your leader to plan for your vaccine time.

28. What is Trinity Health's responsibility if a colleague receives the COVID-19 vaccine as a condition of employment and has an adverse reaction to the vaccination?

If the colleague has an adverse reaction and a qualified physician directly relates the side effects to the COVID-19 vaccination, the colleague may file an incident report via Trinity Health Employee Incident Report (THEIR) for consideration for compensability under Workers' Compensation.

29. If I experience side effects and am unable to perform my job duties, will I receive paid time off?

If you experience side effects immediately following vaccination (generally within 48 hours) and are unable to

perform your job duties, you will be paid for scheduled hours missed. In general, we would expect this time not to exceed one to two scheduled shifts immediately following the vaccination.

30. Will those who receive a booster shot be allowed time should we get sick?

Yes, if you experience side effects immediately following the booster vaccination (generally within 48 hours) and are unable to perform your job duties, you will be paid for scheduled hours missed. In general, we would expect this time not to exceed one to two scheduled shifts immediately following the vaccination.

31. Am I still considered fully vaccinated without the booster dose? Is the booster required?

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32. Please explain COVID-19 PTO. Do you get up to 4 hours per shot and up to 2 days per shot if you have any side effects?

If you experience side effects immediately following vaccination (generally within 48 hours) and are unable to perform your job duties, you will be paid for scheduled hours missed. In general, we would expect this time not to exceed one to two scheduled shifts immediately following the vaccination.

33. For those colleagues who have submitted their vaccination exemption request on time and have not received a response, any idea on timing?

The team is processing high volumes of submissions. In general, it takes up to three weeks to process submissions. Colleagues are encouraged to submit as soon as possible in advance of the due dates.

34. What is the current absence policy if you have been vaccinated and contract COVID-19 while working remotely?

If are unable to perform your job duties, you will be paid for scheduled hours missed.

35. Do you expect mass hiring again due to losing employees because they did not get their COVID-19 vaccine?

Most colleagues have already submitted their COVID-19 vaccination documentation. It is expected that only a limited number of colleagues will not comply with the COVID-19 Prevention Policy.

36. What percentage of colleagues are 100% vaccinated?

As of September 28, 2021, more than 96% of colleagues and more than 99% of leaders took action to comply with the COVID-19 vaccine requirement.

37. If my employment is terminated for not complying with this policy, and I later change my mind, am I eligible for rehire?

Yes, if you change your mind and become vaccinated, you are eligible for rehire. You will not be guaranteed your previous position, but you can apply to open positions.

38. How do volunteers submit proof?

Volunteers will follow the local Health Ministry process, which likely follows the established process for the required flu vaccination for volunteers.

39. I'm under the age of 18. Do I need parental consent to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Most states require parental consent, or the permission of your parent, to be vaccinated. If you are under the age of 18, you will need your parent or guardian to complete a consent form you'll receive in your packet before receiving the vaccine.

40. Are all Trinity Health locations requiring vaccination?

Yes, unless prohibited by state or local regulations. All Trinity Health ministries will require COVID-19 vaccination for their colleagues, clinicians, contractors and partners doing business in their facilities. Two Health Ministries have an extended timeline for enforcing the vaccination requirement. This extended timeframe for compliance does not include new hires or those in Workday who are listed as manager, director, vice president or senior officer. This additional time allows those ministries to focus on issues specific to their market.

41. Is requiring the vaccine for colleagues a conflict of interest for Trinity Health because they have investments in vaccine manufacturers? Are they going to divest in such investments?

No, there is no conflict of interest. The investment interests of Trinity Health are managed by a third party. Trinity Health has not made, and will not make, any investment decisions about its stock holdings in the vaccine manufacturers directly as a result of its vaccine requirement.

42. Is Trinity Health receiving payments based on the amount of vaccines given?

Trinity Health does not receive incentives, rewards, or excessive profits from administering COVID vaccines. As with any vaccine, Trinity Health charges a small administration fee for providing vaccinations, but it only covers some of our actual costs.

43. Where can I learn more about the vaccine?

Refer to our [comprehensive vaccine FAQs](#), our [COVID-19 Vaccine page](#) and the [CDC website](#).