

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we mandate the flu vaccine?

Influenza (the flu) can be a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death. Anyone can get very sick from the flu, including people who are otherwise healthy. Requiring an annual flu vaccine demonstrates our commitment to protect the safety and health of our patients, many of whom already have weakened immune systems, as well as visitors, co-workers and our families.

I'm not involved in direct patient care. Why should I be vaccinated?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the vaccine for all persons over the age of 6 months, especially health care workers. All employees, including those that don't provide direct patient care, such as laboratory, dietary, housekeeping, facilities, and administrative personnel, might be exposed to the flu virus. If you get the flu, you can spread it to others even if you don't feel sick. By getting vaccinated, you help protect yourself, your family at home, and our patients.

When is the deadline for vaccination?

As outlined in policy HSE048, the deadline is the first Tuesday in December. This year, the deadline is **December 1, 2015**.

Who does the policy apply to?

As a condition of employment, appointment to the medical staff, or access to patient and clinical care areas, all Johns Hopkins employees, faculty, residents, volunteers, students, and vendors, regardless of employer, who meet one of the following conditions must receive an annual influenza vaccination or possess an approved exception (see Exception below).

1. Primary work location is anywhere within a hospital building.
2. Primary work location is in any patient or clinical care area.
3. Primary purpose of visit to JHH is to conduct any type of work, including research, in a patient or clinical care area.

What is considered patient care or clinical areas?

Any section of a building, property, or site that is owned, leased, rented, or operated by JHH, JHHSC, or JHU where the care or provision of services to patients or study participants occurs, including, but not limited to, hospitals, outpatient clinics, student and employee health centers, and pharmacies. These areas are defined by the physical or recognized borders of any inpatient and outpatient areas where patients may be seen, evaluated, treated, or wait to be seen.

- A. Buildings which are entirely patient or clinical care areas (for the purpose of this policy).
 1. The Johns Hopkins Hospital:

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- a. 550 N. Broadway
- b. Billings/Administration
- c. Blalock Building
- d. Bloomberg Children's Center
- e. Brady Building
- f. Carnegie Building
- g. Children's Medical and Surgical Center (CMSC)
- h. Halsted Building
- i. Marburg Building
- j. Maumenee Building/Wilmer Eye Institute
- k. Meyer Building
- l. MRI Building
- m. Nelson-Harvey Tower
- n. Osler Building
- o. Park Building
- p. Phipps Building
- q. Sheikh Zayed Tower
- r. Weinberg Building

2. Health Care & Surgery Centers:

- a. Johns Hopkins Health Care & Surgery Center at Green Spring Station
- b. Johns Hopkins Health Care Center at Odenton
- c. Johns Hopkins Health Care & Surgery Center at White Marsh

B. Other buildings owned, leased, rented, or operated by JHHS or JHU which contain Patient or Clinical Care Areas (see definition):

1. East Baltimore Medical Campus:

- a. Church Home Professional Building
- b. Johns Hopkins Outpatient Center (JHOC)
- c. Rubenstein Child Health Building
- d. Smith – Wilmer Building: Bendann Surgical Pavilion

Is it true that that you can get the flu from the flu vaccine?

No, you cannot get the flu from the flu vaccine. The viruses in the vaccine are either killed (as is the case with the shot) or weakened (as is the case with the nasal spray) so that they cannot cause the flu. Some people mistakenly confuse flu symptoms with the vaccine side effects. The most common side effects are:

- Soreness, redness or swelling where the shot is given
- Low-grade fever and aches
- Runny nose, sore throat, cough and headache (nasal mist only)

Almost all people who receive the influenza vaccine have no serious problems. However, if an employee believes that they are experiencing adverse effects related to the vaccination should contact Occupational Health. http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/hse/occupational_health/

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What is the nasal spray vaccine and are there individuals who should not receive it?

This is a highly effective vaccine that is licensed for people up to the age of 49. We do allow health care workers over this age to receive the vaccine if they sign a consent form. This vaccine is not recommended for household members who have close contact with severely immunocompromised persons (e.g., acute leukemia patients).

I am pregnant. Should I get the flu vaccine?

Yes. Pregnant women should receive the flu shot. It is especially important for pregnant women to get the flu shot because they are more likely to have serious complications to themselves and their pregnancy if they get the flu. According to the CDC, they can receive the flu shot at any time, during any trimester, while they are pregnant. Pregnant women should receive the injectable vaccine.

What if I get vaccinated on my own through my doctor's office or another location other than a Johns Hopkins medical facility (i.e. drug store)?

That is acceptable. If you receive the vaccine elsewhere, including a JHCP clinic, please submit your documentation by **December 1** via the online influenza reporting website. Your vaccination status will be updated immediately. <http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/hse/forms/fluform/selfreporting.html>

EXCEPTIONS

What about a person who has medical or religious reasons for declining vaccination?

An exception to the vaccination policy may be requested for certain medical reasons, including documentation of severe allergy to the vaccine or components as defined by the most current recommendations of the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) or a history of Guillain-Barré syndrome within six weeks of an influenza vaccine. If receiving the vaccination conflicts with sincerely held beliefs, a request for religious accommodation may be made.

How do I request an exception?

A. Religious

Personnel must submit a request for medical exception form to Occupational Health Services by the first Tuesday in November. Occupational Health Services will evaluate the request. Forms are located on the HSE website; http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/hse/occupational_health/

B. Medical

JHH and JHHS personnel must submit a Religious Exception Request form to the Office of Organizational Equity by **Nov. 3**.

Phone: 410-735-7283

Fax: 410-735-7569

EEOconcerns@jhmi.edu

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JHU personnel must submit a Religious Exception Request form to the Office of Institutional Equity by **Nov. 3.**

Phone: 410-516-8075

Fax: 410-516-5300

aboyle7@jhu.edu

I received an exception last year. Do I have to submit the paperwork again this year?

Yes. All personnel who have a medical or religious exception must submit a new request. Because the composition and availability of flu vaccines changes from year to year, certain allergies or concerns may no longer be relevant.

If my request for a medical or religious exception is approved, will I still be able to work?

Yes. Those who cannot receive the flu vaccine, whether for religious or medical reasons, will be required to properly wear a protective surgical mask over their mouth and nose when within 6 feet of any patient and when entering a patient room during the influenza season. The effective dates of the flu season will be identified by JHHS Epidemiology and Infection Prevention. This important step to prevent flu transmission is supported by national patient safety and infectious disease prevention organizations.

COMPLIANCE

What happens if I don't want to get the vaccine?

All employees covered by this policy who fail to comply and who have not received an exception will be placed on an unpaid administrative leave of one week or less. If, at the end of the administrative leave, the employee has not met the vaccination requirement, the employee will be considered to have voluntarily resigned. Non-employees, such as students, volunteers, vendors, or temporary workers, will not be permitted to enter patient care or clinical care areas for the duration of the flu season.

Medical staff at all entities who do not comply will be placed on administrative suspension of privileges for the duration of the flu season. They will also be denied access to patient and clinical care areas. Such actions will not be reportable to the Maryland Board of Physicians or the National Physician Data Base (NPDB).

Anyone granted a medical exception or religious accommodation but who fails to wear a surgical mask within six feet of a patient during the influenza season will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

MORE INFORMATION

Centers for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov/flu

Health, Safety and Environment: www.hopkinsmedicine.org/hse