COVID-19 Safety Requirements for NYC Health + Hospitals Staff
New Vaccinate or Test Weekly Policy

Frequently Asked Questions

July 30, 2021

Starting Monday, August 2, 2021, NYC Health + Hospitals (NYC H+H) workers must comply with a policy that requires COVID-19 vaccination or COVID-19 weekly testing to ensure that we continue to protect our patients and our colleagues as fully and safely as possible. Click here to view the official Operating Procedure.

Q: Who is included in this vaccine or weekly test requirement?

A: All NYC Health + Hospitals staff will be required to be fully vaccinated with an approved COVID-19 vaccine or have a weekly test in order to conduct their duties working for our health care system. This includes full or part time staff, affiliate staff, temp workers, students, interns, volunteers, vendors, and others who work in our public hospitals, Gotham Health centers, post-acute care facilities, Central Office, the Family Court program, MetroPlus and Correctional Health Services.

Q: Why are we doing this?

A: The COVID-19 Delta variant is aggressively increasing its prevalence in our community. Positivity rates and hospitalizations are increasing, and are mostly among the unvaccinated. It is necessary to do more to protect our patients and community. This requirement reflects our mission and responsibility to promote the health of the public we serve, and to protect our workforce. While other precautions - like masking, hand hygiene, and physical distance- reduce the risk of COVID-19, vaccination is our most critical and effective tool to stop COVID-19. In the absence of vaccination, testing and ensuring infected workers are isolated is also a critical strategy.

Q: Is this a vaccine mandate?

A: No. You have the option to get the COVID-19 vaccine to protect yourself, your patients and loved ones. If you choose not to get vaccinated, you will have to get tested weekly to ensure we can protect everyone you serve.

Q: I am already vaccinated. Do I have to do anything starting August 2?

A: No action is needed if you were vaccinated at an NYC H+H facility. If you got vaccinated outside NYC H+H, you must share your vaccination record with your local Office of Health Services (OHS) office. You may also upload your vaccination record to a new online application that will be available soon.

Q: I am not vaccinated. When will I need to start getting tested?

A: If you are not ready to get vaccinated, you will need to begin weekly COVID-19 tests the week of August 2, and get tested every week after that. If you get the first dose of a vaccine by August 1, you will not need to do weekly testing as long as you get your second dose by September 1.

Q: What does 'fully vaccinated' mean?

A: You are considered "fully vaccinated" when you are fully protected from the virus, which is two weeks after your one-dose vaccine or two weeks after the second dose of the two-dose vaccine.

Q: Where can I get tested?

A: If you are not ready to be vaccinated and choose to be tested regularly, you can go to any NYC H+H hospitals or health centers to get a weekly COVID-19 test. If you go during work time, you will have to go to the most convenient location to your work location. Testing will be available every day of the week, and for every shift. Please bring your NYC H+H TKID number and insurance information.

Q: Where do I find my Employee ID/TKID#?

A: Check your NYC H+H ID badge – it's the 9-digit number on the back. If your ID doesn't have it, you can also log into your Employee Self Service account: http://hhcinsider.nychhc.org/corpoffices/erc/Pages/ESSMSS.aspx. Select 'personal details', select 'additional information' and you will see your TKID/employee ID.

Q: Will I get time off to get tested every week? Can I do it during my shift?

A: You can get time-off to get the COVID-19 test at the NYC H+H testing location most convenient to your workplace. The health system will offer all employees one hour of comp time if staff are approved to get tested during their lunch break. Time-off to get tested must be arranged with your supervisor in order not to disrupt patient care/operations.

Q: Do I have to get the COVID-19 test on the same day every week, or in the same location?

A: No. You can get the test any day of your scheduled workweek (Sunday – Saturday) and at any NYC H+H testing location as long as the time and location are arranged with your supervisor if it's during work hours.

Q: Can I get tested outside NYC H+H?

A: Yes. But we strongly recommend you get tested inside the NYC H+H system, otherwise you will have to upload your test results into the NYC H+H COVID-19 Staff Testing Registry (https://covid19.nychealthandhospitals.org/stafftesting). Also, please note that we cannot provide time off to get a COVID-19 test outside our health system, unless an outside location is the most convenient to your work location.

Q: How do I upload my COVID-19 test results into that new registry if I choose to get tested outside NYC H+H?

A: If you get a COVID-19 PCR test outside of NYC H+H, you will need to document and upload your weekly test results to the new NYC H+H COVID-19 Staff Testing Registry (https://covid19.nychealthandhospitals.org/stafftesting) from your mobile device or desktop. It's quick and easy. Once you login, complete these fields: Best Contact Number, COVID-19 Test Date, Location and Result. You will then simply upload an image of your test result for that week and click submit.

OHS will review and let you know if any further information is needed. The link to the application will be made available on the intranet and on the ess.nychhc.org environments. If you need additional assistance with uploading your COVID-19 test, please contact your local OHS staff.

Q: If I get tested at an NYC H+H facility, will I have to download my test records into this system?

A: If you get vaccinated or tested at an NYC H+H facility and provide your TKID#, your records will be automatically pulled into the database, which will be used to capture compliance with this new vaccine or test policy. No other action is needed.

Q: Do I need to get tested even if I am on vacation or on sick leave?

A: You have to get tested during a week only if you come in to work at some point during that week. You will not be required to get the weekly test if you are on vacation for the entire workweek (Sunday-Saturday). Talk to your supervisor and plan your weekly test before and after your official time off.

Q: Will I receive a reminder to get tested?

A: Not necessarily. This policy and mandate is your notification. It is your obligation to maintain compliance with vaccination and testing requirements. However, you will be contacted by Human Resources or OHS if you are non-compliant with this policy.

Q: I work at an NYC Health + Hospitals Post-Acute Care facility and already undergo twice a week testing. What changes for me?

A: Post-Acute Care facilities are subject to different regulations that may require more testing than this policy provides. Your facility leadership will let you know what is required for you to be able to work.

Q: When will the weekly test requirement end?

A: Weekly testing can end as soon as you are fully vaccinated – which means you have received all the doses needed for that vaccine and are two weeks after the last dose. If you get a vaccine by August 1, you will not need to get tested at all as long as you complete your second dose, if needed, by September 1. Otherwise, there is no end date to the weekly test requirement at this time. Vaccination or weekly testing will be required for as long as the COVID-19 virus continues to be a threat in our community.

Q: What will happen if I refuse to get vaccinated and test weekly?

A: This is a mandatory policy. If you are not vaccinated and do not get tested every week, you will not be cleared to work and will not be paid for that time when you aren't working.

Q: How will we monitor compliance with the policy?

A: Compliance will be monitored weekly for the week starting August 2. Then every Sunday – Saturday after that. Members of the workforce who are not compliant with the weekly testing requirement will be contacted by their HR or OHS team.

If You Got Vaccinated or Got The Test Outside NYC Health + Hospitals

Q: I already received the COVID-19 vaccine outside the NYC H+H system. What should I do to ensure my vaccine record is updated to be considered in compliance with this new requirement?

A: If you have not already reported your vaccination information, please use the form (found here) to upload and report proof of your vaccination to your local Occupational Health Services department.

Q: If I choose to have my weekly COVID-19 test outside the NYC Health + Hospitals system, how do I report compliance with this new policy?

A: You must download confirmation of your test by going online to the COVID-19 Test Registry: https://covid19.nychealthandhospitals.org/stafftesting.

Q: How do I download my test records into this online registry?

A: A: If you get a COVID-19 PCR test outside of NYC H+H, you will be able to document and upload your test results within the new 'COVID-19 Staff Testing' application. On either your mobile device or desktop, use the following link to access 'COVID-19 Staff Testing'. It's quick and easy. Log in and fill in this information: Best Contact Number, COVID-19 Test Date, Location and Result. You will then be able to upload an image of your test result for that week and click submit. OHS will review and let you know if any further information is needed. If you need additional assistance with uploading your COVID-19 test, please contact your local OHS staff.

COVID Test

Q: What type of COVID test is required?

A: You will need a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) COVID-19 test. That is the only type of test that will be accepted.

Q: I am vaccinated. Should I continue to get tested?

A: Routine testing is not required for those who are fully vaccinated. However, fully vaccinated staff may continue to get tested at no cost and should do so if they develop any signs/symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

Q: How long does it take to get tested? Is there express access for staff?

A: Staff presenting to an NYC H+H testing center will get priority. The actual nasal swab takes less than one minute.

Q: Do I have to pay for the COVID-19 test?

A: COVID-19 tests and vaccines are available at no cost at all NYC H+H locations. No copays or deductibles will be charged. However, we may bill your insurance.

Q: How quickly will I get my test results?

A: Tests performed at an NYC H+H testing center are typically reported within 24-48 hours.

Q: What happens if I test positive?

A: If you test positive, you are required to notify your local facility OHS and follow our policies on leave and return to work. Subsequently, you will be exempt from further testing for 90 days unless you develop new or worsening illness.

COVID Vaccine

Q: If I decide to get vaccinated, can I choose between the two-dose Moderna/Pfizer or the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine?

A: Yes. NYC H+H vaccination centers offer both.

Q: If I get my first dose of the Moderna/Pfizer or a J&J vaccine before August 2nd, do I need to get tested weekly?

A: If you get vaccinated before August 2nd you will not have to get tested for COVID every week, as long as you get any second dose by September 1.

Q: I still have a lot of questions and concerns about the COVID vaccine. How can I learn more?

A: Here are a few resources for you:

+ NYC Health + Hospitals COVID-19 Resource Hub

+ What New Yorkers Need to Know About COVID-19 Vaccines (PDF)

+ The facts about common COVID-19 vaccine myths (PDF)

+ What You Need to Know After Getting Your COVID-19 Vaccine (PDF)

+ For any questions on COVID-19 vaccines, please email COVID-19readiness@nychhc.org.

Vaccine Incentives

Q: The mayor announced that the City will be offering $100 to anyone receiving a first vaccination dose. Does that include city workers?

A: Only people receiving their first dose at designated city-run locations will have the option to select the $100 pre-paid debit card starting Friday July 30.

Q: Will NYC Health + Hospitals vaccination centers offer this cash incentive?

A: NYC H+H hospitals and health centers are not offering the cash incentive to the public. The City's $100 cash incentive will be offered at limited vaccination centers, including three sites run by the NYC Health + Hospitals Test & Trace Corps: Bathgate, Brooklyn Army Terminal and CitiField. The complete list of locations offering the cash incentive can be found here: vax4nyc. nyc.gov.

Q: Does NYC Health + Hospitals offer incentives for vaccine or testing?

A: As per the Interim Policy Regarding COVID-19 Vaccination, NYC Health + Hospitals employees may take up to four (4) hours of excused leave (non-chargeable and code timekeeping record "01") per injection, which includes travel during scheduled work hours related to the administration of each vaccination.

Upon confirmation of being fully vaccinated, NYC Health + Hospitals employees will be credited with three hours of compensatory time. The health system will soon begin to offer some exciting prizes as giveaways and incentives for vaccination. Stay tuned.

State Vaccine or Test Policy

Q: What is the State vaccine or test policy announced 7/28?

A: Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced that patient-facing health care workers at state-run hospitals will be required to get vaccinated for COVID-19 by Labor Day. There will not be an option to be tested in lieu of vaccination for these patient-facing health care workers. The

Governor also announced that all New York State employees—about 130,000 people—will be required to get vaccinated for COVID-19 by Labor Day. State employees who are not vaccinated will be required to be tested for COVID-19 on a weekly basis.

Q: Do we expect the Governor to mandate vaccination for NYC H+H staff?

A: That is always a possibility.