

FAQ: UCMC & BSD Employee Vaccination Logistics

Updated: Jan. 6, 2021

****We will continue to provide updates to this material as new information becomes available. Please look for our additional FAQs: Vaccines 101 and COVID-19 Vaccine Information.****

1. Will the vaccine be required for employees?

No. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine will be optional. However, COVID-19 can have serious, life-threatening complications, and there is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you. And if you get sick, you could spread the disease to friends, family, and others around you. Based on what is known about vaccines for other diseases, experts believe a COVID-19 vaccine may help to keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get the disease. In addition, getting vaccinated will help to protect the people around you, including our patients.

2. Why won't you require the COVID-19 vaccine?

With COVID-19 vaccine in short supply we recognize there will likely be more volunteers than available doses. Like many of our peer organizations around the country, we believe the vaccine is one of the best ways employees can protect themselves and their families, friends, and patients.

3. Will every UCMC/BSD employee be able to get one?

Initially, we will not have enough vaccine for everyone at once. Therefore, we will be prioritizing front-line workers consistent with scientific and regulatory practice. (*See more details below.*) While we ultimately expect to be able to provide vaccinations to all employees, we cannot guarantee vaccines for those who decline them and cannot predict how quickly additional vaccines will become available. It is uncertain how long it will take to vaccinate everyone who is eligible. This process could take several months to complete, particularly for those employees who won't be eligible until later stages.

4. How will UChicago Medicine decide which employees get vaccinated first?

The CDC, in conjunction with the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), is providing guidance on who should receive the COVID-19 vaccine first. Our medical center and all of the other provider organizations have committed to following those standards. Healthcare workers have been specifically prioritized, particularly those who provide direct patient care. Others will follow based on the prioritization plan that is received from the CDC and CDPH, which will allocate vaccines to our medical center.

An allocation committee has been created at UChicago Medicine to help us develop a comprehensive and equitable stratification model that ensures those who need the vaccine most will receive it first, while still working within the CDC/CDPH framework of identified priority groups. Those who are at a lower exposure risk level will also be able to get the vaccine, but will receive it in later waves based on availability. This process, led by Chief Medical Officer Stephen Weber, MD, and Chief Pharmacy Officer Kevin Colgan, PharmD, involves a number of considerations and was developed in consultation with the MacLean Center for Clinical Medical Ethics, the Urban Health Initiative, and other academic and clinical leaders.

5. How will the allocation process work?

We are grouping UCMC & BSD employees into three waves for COVID-19 eligibility and distribution. This process was created by our internal allocation committee in consultation with ethicists, academic experts, and clinical leadership.

- **Wave 1:** Any employee whose roles have DIRECT patient contact (i.e. employees who provide care within 6 feet of patients or who handle infectious materials). This will be our largest group and will include clinicians as well as support staff.
- **Wave 2:** Employees who are working in-person at our patient care facilities, but who have no direct patient contact. Employees at off-site locations that do not provide patient care will be part of Wave 3.

- **Wave 3:** Workers who are currently remote or who work in non-clinical off-site locations (e.g. Darien or Burr Ridge).

Ingalls will manage its own distribution process separately. Vaccine is being allocated to Ingalls at the state level. Our distribution is being coordinated by the city of Chicago.

Within each wave, our plan is to prioritize employees who **self-identify** as falling into high-risk categories because of the following current medical conditions:

- Cancer
- Chronic kidney disease
- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Obesity ([BMI of 30 or higher](#))
- Older than 65
- Immunocompromised (weakened immune system) because of a solid organ transplant
- Pregnancy
- Serious heart conditions such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies
- Sickle cell disease
- Type 2 diabetes
- Smoking

These employees are being given priority within their waves because they are at higher risk for serious health outcomes if they develop COVID-19.

If we have more people in a wave than available vaccines, we will use a lottery system within each group to determine when employees will be eligible. This randomized practice, in concert with the three-wave distribution plan, is being deployed by other institutions and is designed to ensure an equitable distribution and will also prevent a singular unit or department from being adversely impacted if staff do develop side effects from the vaccine. Individuals with high-risk medical conditions will receive vaccine before the lottery randomization is applied.

6. Will new employees also be eligible?

New hires are being regularly added to our program through both UCMC and BSD HR. Individual managers do not need to reach out to our vaccine team to request vaccinations for new employees.

7. Will I be able to choose which vaccine I get (i.e. Moderna vs. Pfizer?)

No. Due to limited inventory, people will not be able to select which vaccine they receive.

8. How will I be notified I'm able to get a vaccine?

Now all employees will be assigned an EPIC Medical Record Number, enabling them if they choose to activate a MyChart account in order to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Employees who already have an existing MyChart account will not have to create a new one. We will provide additional enrollment support to help people activate MyChart accounts if they do not already have one. Your MyChart account will be used to provide you notifications and details about vaccination. You can also download free MyChart apps in Google Play or Apple's app store, which can send push notifications to your smart phone.

While we hope all employees get vaccinated, it remains optional. Employees who don't want the vaccine will not need to follow the MyChart activation steps and will not be prompted to schedule a vaccine.

9. How long will I have to decide if I want the vaccine once it's offered to me?

Once you're eligible, you'll be able to schedule your appointment for any time during our employee vaccination program. Appointments may be more difficult to obtain as eligibility moves into subsequent waves. We cannot guarantee vaccines for those who decline them.

10. What if I'm offered a vaccine, but miss my vaccine appointment?

It is essential you make your scheduled vaccine time. You will be able to reschedule through MyChart, but we ask that you make every effort to go to your appointment as scheduled.

11. How much will the vaccine cost?

The vaccine will be free.

12. How do I schedule my vaccine appointment?

Once you have activated your MyChart account (if you did not have one), you will get a notice in MyChart when you are eligible to receive one. This message will indicate you have a new scheduling ticket available. You will need to follow the instructions in MyChart to schedule the date and time of your immunization. Vaccinations can be scheduled only in MyChart, and appointments are required. If you need to reschedule, you can do so in MyChart.

13. Where do I go to get a vaccine?

Employee vaccinations will be provided in a dedicated space in Mitchell. You will receive specific instructions about where to go once you have scheduled your appointment. Please arrive on time so we can maintain appropriate social distance in the space.

14. When should I get my second dose?

If you receive the Pfizer vaccine, you will need to get a second dose three weeks after your first injection. If you receive the Moderna vaccine, you will need to get the second dose four weeks after your first injection. You will be given a COVID-19 vaccination card that indicates what vaccine you received and when your booster dose is due. You will schedule your appointment to get your booster at the time you receive your first dose.

It is important that you receive the second booster injection of vaccine, which is required for your immune system to produce adequate amounts of antibodies to protect you. It is unclear how long the protection of the first dose will last on its own. **Not taking the booster injection could leave you unprotected.** (Pfizer publicly stated on December 8: “The efficacy of the vaccine after the first dose is about 52 percent. After the second dose, that rises to about 95 percent. Two doses of vaccine provide maximum protection.”)

15. Will I need to be observed after my appointment?

We believe it is safe for employees working on patient care units to return directly to those units as long as they feel well immediately after receiving their vaccination. Employees who are not returning to clinical areas should be observed for 15 minutes after their vaccine. Anyone with a history of severe allergic or anaphylactic reactions (including those from food) should be observed for 30 minutes after receiving the vaccine.

16. What should I do if I don't feel well after I get my vaccine?

As part of the vaccination process, employees will need to download the [CDC's V-SAFE](#) smartphone app. When you arrive for your vaccine, you'll be given a code and other information about the app, which you'll use to report side effects or medically significant events. The app also will prompt you to get a second dose, if necessary. The CDC will send you daily texts through the app at first and may contact you for additional information based on the details you provide in your responses. After your first week, you will receive weekly messages through V-Safe to determine if you are having any adverse effects. You will receive instructions on V-SAFE at the same time you receive your first vaccination. Our Occupational Medicine team will also operate a post-vaccination side effect hotline (773-702-9647) from 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. on Mondays through Fridays to answer your questions. If you believe your side effects are severe enough to need medical care, you should consult your primary care provider or other healthcare professional. If you believe you are experiencing a medical emergency, you should dial 911 or go to the closest emergency room.

17. Will people in my household be able to get the vaccine? What about the University of Chicago community?

Not yet. Based on the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices guidelines, the first phase of distribution will involve high-risk healthcare workers. The vaccine won't be available to the general public until later. Updates on the federal allocation process, as well as its impact on our patients and the larger University of Chicago community, will be widely communicated.

18. When will the vaccine be available for patients and other members of the community?

We don't know yet. Timing depends on how much vaccine is available after the initial distribution phases for the highest-risk groups.

19. Where can I go to learn more information?

We will regularly update this FAQ as new material becomes available. In addition, the CDC has developed a [vaccination page with information specific to healthcare workers](#).

20. Will I need to use sick leave/PTO if I don't feel well enough to work?

Yes. As is the case with other vaccinations, you will be able to return to work immediately after your COVID-19 vaccine. You may develop side effects such as site pain, fever, chills, fatigue, muscle pain, joint pain, headache and swollen lymph nodes. Most of these reactions will be mild to moderate and are a sign that your immune system is activating to protect you from the virus. If you have mild side effects on Day 1, or improving side effects on Day 2 after injection, you can return to work. If after two days, your side effects/symptoms continue or worsen you will need to stay home from work and get a COVID-19 test. **You will need to stay home if you develop a fever of 100.0F or higher (at any time) or if you have specific COVID-19 symptoms, such as cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell.**

21. Will vaccines be available for employees who work in off-site locations?

Vaccines will be available first at our Hyde Park campus. We eventually plan to offer doses to employees in off-site locations. Ingalls will have its own separate vaccination program.

22. What are the vaccination clinic hours?

In order to vaccinate as many employees as possible as quickly as possible, we are planning a large-scale vaccination effort. We tentatively plan to offer vaccines from 6 a.m. – 10 p.m., 7 days a week. We may scale back our hours based on how many doses of vaccine we receive, but we are committed to making sure the vaccine is available to those who are working a variety of shifts.

23. Should I be concerned if my coworker gets scheduled before I do?

No. While we don't know how long it will take to complete our employee vaccination process, we hope to fully vaccinate all UChicago Medicine employees by February. We will be dividing employees into three waves as outlined above. Within each wave, we'll be prioritizing employees with high-risk medical conditions. If we have more people in a wave than available vaccines, we will use a lottery system within each group to determine when employees will be eligible. This randomized practice, in concert with the three-wave distribution plan, is being deployed by other institutions and is designed to ensure an equitable distribution and will also prevent a singular unit or department from being adversely impacted if staff do develop side effects from the vaccine.

24. If I receive my first dose of vaccine in Hyde Park, can I receive my next dose at another location (e.g. Orland Park) where vaccine is also being administered?

No. You must receive your second (booster) dose at the same location where you received your initial dose.

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