

# 2020 Mandatory Influenza Vaccination Program Frequently Asked Questions

Novant Health continues to be a leader in healthcare by **requiring an annual influenza vaccination** for all team members, physicians, volunteers, contract staff, students and others who work, or provide services at a Novant Health facility. Last year, we administered more than 40,000 influenza vaccines and had an overall vaccination rate of more than 98%.

This document contains important information you need to know about the 2020 influenza vaccination period. Additional information may be found on the CDC website or you may contact the Employee Occupational Health offices, (EOH), Charlotte office, **704-384-7578**; greater Winston-Salem office, **336-277-6696**; coastal office, **910-721-1440**; or Prince William Medical Center office, **703-369-8406**

## *Table of Contents*

Within this FAQ document, you will find the following topics addressed. You can scroll to the topic or click on the hyperlink for direct access to the section that interests you.

[Important Dates and Deadlines](#)

[Flu Vaccine](#)

[Vaccination Period](#)

[Exemptions](#)

[Patients & Guests](#)

[Students, Vendors & Contractors](#)

[New Team Members](#)

## *Important Dates and Deadlines*

**October 1 – October 31:** This is the 2020 influenza vaccination period. The flu vaccine will be offered at employee occupational health [flu clinics](#) during this time; see I-Connect for dates and times. Flu vaccines must be received by 5 p.m. October 31. Influenza vaccinations received at other locations prior to October 1 are acceptable as long as they are from the 2020-2021 influenza season.

- ❖ **September 10 at 5 p.m.:** The deadline for submitting medical or religious exemption requests and all associated paperwork. We are not able to process exemption requests submitted after September 10 at 5 p.m.
- ❖ **October 31 at 5 p.m.:** This is the deadline for receiving the flu vaccine and submitting proof of vaccination if you have not been granted an exemption. Team Members who receive the flu vaccine after the deadline are not compliant with the mandatory vaccination program. **Please note:** All EOH offices will be closed on Saturday Oct. 31. If a team member chooses to receive a flu vaccine on Sat Oct 31st he or she will need to obtain the vaccine from an alternate source before 5 p.m. on Oct. 31 and fax documentation to EOH prior to the 5 p.m. deadline.

- ❖ Team members who do not have an exemption and did not receive the flu vaccine or did not submit proof of vaccination by 5 p.m. on **October 31** will be suspended. Suspension will be for a minimum of 2 days and will be lifted as appropriate documentation is received in EOH. Those who received the vaccine prior to October 31 and failed to submit proof of vaccination can submit proof of vaccination during this time, however, team members who do not provide documentation that they received the flu vaccine by **October 31** at 5 p.m. will be considered to have resigned their employment at the end of the seven day suspension. There will be no grace period. The same dismissal process applies to volunteers, contract workers, vendors and others who work in our facilities.

## *Flu Vaccine*

- **What kind of flu vaccine is being used this year?** Flucelvax is an inactivated vaccine which contains four of the most common types of flu viruses. This vaccine is a cell-based vaccine rather than egg-based. Flucelvax is a pre-filled syringe that is latex free, preservative free, antibiotic free, and egg free. It does not contain pork or mercury.
- **Does Novant Health have flu vaccines that don't include eggs, pork or mercury?** Yes. Flucelvax does not contain pork or mercury. Flucelvax is from mammalian cells rather than eggs.
- **Can a breastfeeding mother receive the flu shot?** Yes. Breastfeeding is fully compatible with flu vaccination. Preventing the flu in a mother can reduce the chance that the infant will get the flu. By breastfeeding, mothers pass on the antibodies that their bodies make in response to the flu shots to the infant, which can reduce the infant's chances of getting the flu. This is especially important for infants less than six months old, who have no other way of receiving vaccine antibodies, since they are too young to be vaccinated.

## *Vaccination Period*

- **When is the 2020 flu vaccination period?** The vaccination period is October 1 to 31. The dates and times of the Novant Health team member [flu clinics](#) will be posted on I-Connect. Influenza vaccinations received at other locations prior to October 1 are acceptable, if they are from the 2020-2021 influenza season.
- **What's the deadline for getting the flu vaccine? The deadline is October 31 at 5 p.m.** You must receive the flu vaccine by the deadline and submit documentation of vaccination by this time, unless you have an exemption. Receiving the flu vaccine after the deadline is not considered compliant.
- **What happens if I don't have an exemption and I do not get the flu vaccine or submit proof of vaccination by October 31 at 5 p.m.?** Team members who do not have an exemption and did not receive the flu vaccine or did not submit proof of vaccination by 5 p.m. on **October 31** will be suspended for a minimum of 2 business days. EOH will review any documentation received after 5 p.m. on October 31 and submit a listing of non-compliant team members to Employee Relations. Those who received the vaccine prior to October 31 at 5 p.m. and failed to submit proof of vaccination can submit proof of vaccination during this time. However, team members who do not provide documentation that they received the flu vaccine by **October 31** at 5 p.m. will be considered to have resigned their employment at the end of the seven day suspension. There will be no grace period.

- **Do I have to have my badge with me in order to get a flu vaccine at a Novant Health team member flu clinic?** Yes. You **must** have your Novant Health badge with you in order to get a flu vaccine. We use the badge to ensure correct record-keeping and reporting. You **must** also present with appropriate **facial covering/mask** at the time of the flu vaccine administration. Facial mask/covering will not be provided at the flu clinics.
- Novant Team Members must use their “pre-shift” COVID screening for entrance to flu clinics. Non-Novant team members must be screened including temperature and questionnaire upon arrival.
- **Can I get the flu vaccine from a non-Novant Health location?** Yes. You may get the flu vaccine from a non-Novant Health location as long as you get the vaccine and submit proof of vaccination by the **October 31 5 p.m.** deadline. See the question below for flu vaccines received from NHMG providers.
- **How do I show proof that I got my flu shot at a non-Novant Health location?** To submit proof of vaccination, you need to scan and upload a copy of the proof of vaccination into Novant Health Self-Service using the link located at: Self Service>Employee Forms>Influenza Confirmation Form. If you do not have access to scanning there are other options: You can take a picture of your documentation with your camera phone, email it to yourself then upload it. You can also fax the documentation to your regional EOH office. Contact your regional EOH office if you need help.
- **Do I have to submit proof of vaccination if I get the flu vaccine from my NHMG provider?** Yes. **You must submit proof of vaccination by 5 p.m. on October 31<sup>st</sup> if you get the vaccine from your NHmg provider (because the influenza database does not interface with EPIC).** You need to print a copy of your proof of vaccination from the Immunization section in MyChart or ask your NHMG provider for a copy of your completed influenza documentation form. Scan and upload the document into Self-Service using the link located at: *Self-Service>Employee Forms>Influenza Confirmation Form*. Contact your regional EOH office if you require assistance.

## *Exemptions*

- **When can I request a medical or religious exemption from the flu vaccine? The Flu Exemption Committees will be evaluating new requests for exemption from the flu vaccine beginning on August 13. The deadline for new exemption requests is September 8 at 5 p.m.** All exemption requests and supporting information must be submitted by the deadline. We are not able to process requests received after the deadline.
- **How do I submit a request for a medical or religious exemption?** Submit your completed exemption request form and all required information to the Flu Exemptions mailbox ([RZG648@novanthealth.org](mailto:RZG648@novanthealth.org)) by September 10 at 5 p.m. We are not able to process requests received after September 10 at 5 p.m.
- **How will I know if my request for exemption was granted or not?** Exemption determinations are made within 5 days of receipt of submitting a request and the required paperwork. If your exemption request is approved, you and your department manager will receive a letter confirming the approval. Your manager will receive a flu sticker that you will need to affix to your badge indicating your exemption. Please remember that since you have been approved for an exemption, you will need to mask during the entire flu season. Information about masking can be found on I-Connect.
- **My request for an exemption was denied. Do I still have to get the flu vaccine?** Yes. You must get the flu vaccine by the 5 p.m. **October 31** deadline if you do not have an exemption.

- **If I got an exemption last year, do I have to request an exemption again this year?** No. You do not need to request another exemption unless there is a change in your medical condition or religious belief. Once an exemption is approved, it is considered permanent and in effect for all future flu seasons unless otherwise noted in your initial approval letter.
- **I have been approved for an exemption from the flu vaccine. When do I have to begin wearing a mask if I am within 6 feet of patients?** The current Covid-19 universal masking requirement supersedes flu masking requirements for the 2020-2021 flu season. Any changes to masking requirements will be communicated by leaders.

## ***Patients & Guests***

- **Will we mask patients who have signs and symptoms of the flu?** The current Covid-19 universal masking requirement supersedes any masking requirement for the 2020-2021 flu season. Team members should adhere to these safety measures related to flu symptoms.
  - The first line of defense is at the check-in area. Team Members must screen all patients and err on the side of caution. If you suspect that a patient is ill with flu-like symptoms, give him or her a mask and isolate as much as possible.
  - Place all suspect patients on droplet precautions as soon as you suspect flu-like illness. A nurse can implement isolation precautions and obtain the physician order at a later time.
  - Place a mask on all patients with suspected flu-like illness any time the patient is out of the room or being transported through the facility.
  - Team members who get sick with flu-like illness should stay home until they feel better and have been fever-free without taking antipyretic (Advil, Aspirin, Tylenol) for at least 24 hours. Team members must clear through EOH to return to work.
- **Will we require our guests to show proof of vaccination?** The current Covid-19 universal masking requirement supersedes any masking requirement for the 2020-2021 flu season. Visitation is important to the health and wellness of our patients. At this time, we have no plans to require proof of vaccination for visitors. We will continue our practice of asking guests to refrain from visiting, if they are ill. However, we know that sometimes a visitor must come to the hospital when he or she is sick.

## ***Students, Vendors & Contractors***

- **Will students be vaccinated so they can continue to work in our facilities?** Yes. The mandatory vaccination program applies to students, and flu vaccines will be available during the flu vaccination designated period. Students who show proof of vaccination are welcome to continue their participation. A student who cannot show proof of vaccination will not be permitted to continue in his or her program after **October 31** through the date that we determine flu season has ended. This is typically the March to April timeframe.
- **Are vendors required to have vaccine?** Yes. Vendors must follow the same process as our team members when visiting any Novant Health facility. Materials management staffs communicate this information to the 700+ vendors who are registered to do business with Novant Health. If a vendor in one of our facilities appears ill, he or she should be asked to leave immediately. The health of our patients and staff is our top priority.

- **Can contract team members and clinical rotation students get the flu vaccine at a Novant Health team member flu clinic?** Yes. We will provide the flu vaccine to contract team members and students as long as we have the vaccine available.

## ***New Team Members***

- **How will new team members get their flu shot?** New team members will receive the influenza vaccine or may request an exemption when they report to EOH for the new team member health screening.
- **Are you telling prospective team members about the mandatory flu vaccine?** Yes. All potential team members are notified that we have a mandatory influenza vaccination program. Team members are also asked to sign an attestation form informing them of the mandatory influenza program upon hire.