Frequently asked questions for employees about the 2020-21 UC influenza vaccination order

Q1. Is the flu vaccination requirement a permanent change to UC policy?
A1. No. The new requirement is based on the university’s assessment of the current situation and will be revisited as the situation demands.

Q2. To whom does the order apply?
A2. The executive order applies to UC students, faculty, and staff. For students, it will be implemented through the existing Immunization Policy and Immunization Exemption Policy; for faculty and staff, it will be implemented through facility screening protocols or alternative local procedures.

Q3. Why hasn’t UC required flu immunizations of all faculty and staff in the past?
A3. Faculty, other academic employees, and staff working in the university’s clinical facilities have long been required to participate in a flu immunization program. The additional action was needed at this time, given the unique and serious conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic in circulation simultaneously with influenza. The influenza vaccination requirement for the entire UC community, including faculty, other academic appointees, and staff, was deemed necessary for the health of the entire community and ensuring our health care systems and our communities are able to maintain capacity to care for our patients.

Q4. Is there a penalty or consequence for faculty and staff if they do not get a flu shot?
A4. Individuals who do not certify that they have received the 2020-2021 flu vaccine or have an approved exemption or accommodation will not have access to university facilities. If the inability to access university facilities affects an employee’s ability to perform job functions, supervisors will work with employees to find alternatives so they can continue to work, but there may be consequences as determined by the employee’s supervisor.

Q5. How will faculty and staff provide proof that they have received their flu shot?
A5. All locations will be asked to adjust their symptom screening apps on or before November 1 to ask employees to certify they have received the 2020-2021 flu vaccine or have an approved exemption or accommodation. Individual locations may adopt alternative local procedures.

Q6. Are there any exemptions from the universal mandate?
A6. Yes. Employees may request a medical exemption by having their health care provider complete the Medical Exemption Request Form attached to the executive order, and then submitting the form to the designated campus official. If an employee is requesting a medical exemption or any other accommodation due to a disability, the employee should contact their local disability management office (who will coordinate with the local campus medical official as appropriate). Requests for religious accommodations will be handled through the interactive process consistent with local policies and procedures. Due to the severe risks posed by the confluence of influenza and COVID-19 this year, no other exceptions apply.

Q7. Will faculty or staff working remotely this fall need to document immunization by November 1?
A7. If faculty or staff working remotely need to access a UC facility at any time, they must certify by November 1 that they have received the 2020-2021 flu vaccine or have an approved exemption or accommodation.

Q8. When do you estimate that this year’s flu vaccine will be available?
A8. Typically, the influenza vaccine is available starting in late August; however, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the best source for information on this year’s flu vaccine and when it will be available and recommended. Once UC Student Health Centers receive inventories of this year’s vaccine, they will send notices to their campus communities. Students, faculty, other academic appointees, and staff may also receive vaccinations at retail pharmacies or their physician’s office. UC Health will work to make it as easy as possible for those who access care through UC medical centers to receive the flu vaccine.
Q9. What is the cost of the flu vaccinations for faculty or staff?
A9. All UC-sponsored health plans cover influenza vaccination at no cost to employees. Some locations may also operate free flu clinics.

Q10. If an employee does not have health insurance that covers the full cost of a vaccine, will UC reimburse the employee for the cost?
A10. No. Please contact your county’s public health department for information about the availability of free or low-cost flu vaccines.

Q11. Will you be setting up flu vaccine clinics for faculty/staff at UC locations that are not campuses (UCOP, Sacramento, Washington D.C., ANR, etc.)?
A11. No. Due to public health requirements currently in place, this may not be possible at all locations. Faculty and staff at any location can obtain the vaccine from a local pharmacy or physician’s office.

Q12. If a faculty/staff member does not get their flu vaccine, and therefore cannot enter UC facilities, can't they still work remotely?
A12. Yes, if their supervisor determines their job does not require on-site presence.

Q13. What about faculty/staff who have been strictly socially isolating due to being high-risk for COVID-19? Will they be forced to go to a health care facility or pharmacy to get a vaccine?
A13. No, but we strongly recommend that they consult with their health care providers about the relative risks of foregoing the vaccine versus receiving it. However, to protect others they will not be admitted to campus facilities (except as patients), unless they have an approved exemption or accommodation.

Q14. Will hourly workers be granted time off to obtain the vaccine?
A14. Policy covered hourly employees may take up to two hours of paid time. Employees must provide advance notice to their supervisor.

Q15. Will this requirement apply to union-represented employees?
A15. Yes. UCOP Labor Relations will be bargaining the effects of this new requirement with the systemwide unions prior to implementation.

Q16. Does this include Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL)?
A16. Yes, this policy applies to LBNL.

Q17. Is November 1 a firm deadline for when faculty and staff must document they’ve received a flu vaccination or an approved exemption or accommodation?
A17. Yes, this is a firm deadline. Everyone is encouraged to obtain the 2020-2021 vaccine when it becomes available, consistent with CDC guidance.