



## **Healthcare Personnel Influenza Vaccination Guideline 2018-2019**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Q. Why is Ascension requiring all healthcare personnel to receive the influenza vaccine?**

A. To ensure we are doing all we can to help our patients live well and to protect their health and safety, Ascension requires all healthcare personnel to receive the annual influenza vaccination as a condition of employment, providing services, and maintenance of clinical privileges. This guideline is grounded in our Mission to provide spiritually-centered holistic care to all persons and improve the health of those individuals and communities we serve.

#### **Q. To whom does this guideline apply?**

A. This guideline applies to all Health Care Personnel (HCP) defined as all employed associates and non-employed workers providing services for the ministry.

#### **Q. I do not have direct patient contact. Why must I be vaccinated?**

A. In the spirit of One Ascension, the guideline applies to all employed and non-employed individuals providing services for the ministry.

#### **Exemption Process:**

#### **Q. Are there exemptions from the guideline? If so what is the process?**

A. Yes, Ascension provides an option for HCP to request an exemption from annual influenza vaccination. HCP seeking exemption from annual influenza vaccination by virtue of a medical contraindication or religious belief must submit a written request with supporting documentation.

All exemption requests must be submitted and received via [Employee-Health@seton.org](mailto:Employee-Health@seton.org) no later than October 31, 2018. The decision to grant an exemption will generally be communicated in writing no later than November 30, 2018.

#### **Q. What are the requirements for a medical or religious exemption?**

Religious declination must include a written statement indicating the HCP's opposition to influenza vaccination and the following:

- A belief that has a sufficiently reasonable religious component
- Conveyance of moral conscience

- An integration between the religious beliefs and sincerity of behaviors demonstrated through daily life

Medical declination must include supporting medical records signed by a licensed healthcare provider indicating HCP has a condition contraindicated for influenza vaccination. Contraindications include:

- Severe allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis)
- History of Guillain-Barre Syndrome within six weeks after a previous influenza vaccination
- Medical condition in which licensed health care provider clearly and definitely recommends deferral of influenza vaccination will be considered

**Q. Is a severe egg allergy an acceptable reason for a medical exemption?**

A. In the past, people with severe egg allergies were unable to receive the influenza vaccine. However, there are egg-free vaccines available now. This vaccine is available in limited quantities and will be administered exclusively by Associate Health, as appropriate.

**Q. HCP seeking exemption from annual influenza vaccination by virtue of a medical contraindication must submit a written request with supporting provider documentation for the 2018-2019 influenza season.**

A. If granted a permanent Medical Exemption for the 2018-2019 influenza season you will not be required to complete a yearly influenza vaccination exemption. However, permanent exemptions may be rescinded in the event Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and/or best practice guidelines change or advancement in the art of vaccination design occurs, at which time HCP will be notified that exemption resubmission is required.

**Q. If I had an approved religious exemption last year, will I need to submit documentation of an exemption request again?**

A. Yes, documentation requesting a religious exemption must be completed each year.

**Q. What if I do not have a licensed medical provider who can fill out my medical exemption request form?**

A. The form requires an appropriate signature from a licensed medical provider who has been providing ongoing medical care to certify the information submitted.

**Q. Can an Associate Health nurse sign the medical exemption form?**

A. No, this form must be signed by a licensed medical provider that routinely provides your medical care.

**Q. What if I miss the October 31, 2018, deadline to apply for an exemption?**

A. Unless you have documentation of a change in your medical status since the October 31, 2018

deadline, forms will not be accepted after October 31 at 11:59pm.

**Q. Once submitted, when will I know the status of my exemption request?**

A. The designated reviewing body will meet regularly to review any exemption forms submitted. All decisions will generally be emailed to the associated HCP by November 30, 2018.

**Q. Will my manager know about my request for an exemption?**

A. Following the December 15, 2018 deadline, Human Resources will notify direct leaders regarding overall compliance.

**Q. What if my exemption request is denied?**

A. If an exemption request has been submitted on time and denied, you will have until December 15, 2018, to either receive the vaccine through Associate Health or submit appropriate documentation to Associate Health of having received the vaccine elsewhere.

**Q. Is there an appeal process?**

A. No.

**Q. What will happen if I refuse to be vaccinated?**

A. The deadline for HCP compliance is December 15, 2018. Employed and non-employed HCP who have not complied with the influenza requirement by December 15 will be suspended or have privileges suspended pending further investigation for possible termination of employment/privileges/services. Questions should be directed to Human Resources.

**Q. When is the “influenza season”?**

A. The “influenza season” is defined as the occurrence of confirmed cases of the disease in the community, as identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and/or the Texas Department of Public Health. Typically, the influenza season runs from October 1, 2018-March 31, 2019, or longer dependent upon seasonal incidence activity and CDC guidelines.

**Who is Included:**

**Q. Who else is covered by this Guideline?**

A. All HCP. HCP is defined as all employed associates and non-employed workers providing services for the ministry.

**Q. What about new hires?**

A. The requirement will be integrated into the new hire process similar to other pre-employment requirements. Annual influenza vaccine is available and will be required for the applicable season, until it expires, which is routinely June 30 of the corresponding year.

### **Where to Get the Vaccine**

#### **Q. Is Associate Health giving the vaccines again this year?**

A. Yes, influenza vaccination will be offered through Associate Health influenza vaccination clinics. The clinic schedules can be found on the legacy intranet sites.

#### **Q. What will I need to bring to the Associate Health influenza vaccination clinics?**

A. Associates will need to bring their Ascension name badge to the influenza clinic to ensure accurate tracking and documentation of vaccination.

#### **Q. What if none of the influenza clinic times are convenient for me?**

A. Obtaining vaccination at one of the scheduled Associate Health influenza vaccination clinics is preferred; however, multiple vaccination options are available:

- ***Associate Health Influenza Vaccination Clinics*** (Please check the intranet sites often for the most up-to-date schedule information. Requests for vaccine other than that which is currently available at clinics should be discussed with Associate Health)
- ***Ascension Medical Group Clinic Sites; Vaccine for associates working at these sites may be available.*** (Contact your AMG clinic site leader for questions regarding availability)
- ***Ascension Retail Pharmacies*** (Individuals are strongly encouraged to call ahead to determine resource availability)

**\*\*\*It will be the responsibility of the individual to submit proof of Influenza Vaccination to Associate Health if received from an Ascension Retail Pharmacy site.**

- ***Acceptance of proof of vaccination elsewhere***

#### **Q. What if I receive a flu vaccine somewhere else?**

A. Employed Ascension associate vaccinations given through Associate Health will automatically be tracked. If you receive the vaccination elsewhere, proper documentation, including location, vaccine lot number, and the signature of the person administering the vaccine must be submitted and received in Associate Health by December 15, 2018 at 11:59 p.m. Proof of influenza vaccination should be submitted to [Employee-Health@seton.org].

#### **Q. Will you have high-dose vaccines for those 65 years of age and older?**

A. High-dose influenza vaccines will not be available through Associate Health and Wellness.

**Q. Will latex and thimerosal-free vaccines be available?**

A. Yes, latex-free and thimerosal-free vaccines will be available through Associate Health.

**Q. How can I request or obtain proof of my influenza vaccination?**

A. Once proof of vaccination has been submitted to Associate Health and documented in the Associate Health EHR, associates will receive an automatic email with vaccination details to their Ascension email.

**Vaccine Safety and Effectiveness:**

**Q. How do influenza vaccines work?**

A. The influenza vaccine causes antibodies to develop in the body approximately two weeks after vaccination. These antibodies provide protection against infection with the viruses that are in the vaccine.

The influenza vaccine protects against influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during the upcoming season. Traditional influenza vaccines (called trivalent vaccines) are made to protect against three influenza viruses; an influenza A (H1N1) virus, an influenza A (H3N2) virus, and an influenza B virus. In addition, most recently, there are influenza vaccines made to protect against four influenza viruses (called “quadrivalent” vaccines). These vaccines protect against the same viruses as the trivalent vaccine as well as an additional B virus.

**Q. Why do I need an influenza vaccine every year?**

A. Influenza vaccination is needed every season for two reasons. First, the body’s immune response from vaccination declines over time, so an annual vaccine is needed for optimal protection. Second, because influenza viruses are constantly changing, the formulation of the influenza vaccine is reviewed each year and often updated to keep up with changing influenza viruses.

**Vaccination Deadline:**

**Q. By what date must I be vaccinated?**

A. Proof of influenza vaccination must be submitted and received in Associate Health by December 15, 2018 at 11:59pm.

**Q. What if I am on an approved leave of absence and will not return until after December 15, 2018?**

A. All HCP on an approved leave of absence during the vaccination period will be required to receive an influenza vaccination before they will be allowed to return to work or provide services. The vaccine may be received from Associate Health prior to the return to work or documentation of receiving the vaccine

elsewhere must be submitted to Associate Health prior to the return to work. Questions should be directed to Human Resources.

**Q. What if there is a shortage of vaccine?**

A. If influenza vaccine distribution delays or vaccine shortages occur; prioritization of vaccine administration will be done in accordance with CDC and/or State Department of Health guidelines.

**Q. If I refuse to be vaccinated, will I be terminated?**

A. The deadline for HCP compliance is December 15, 2018. Employed and non-employed HCP who have not complied with the influenza requirement by December 15 will be suspended or have privileges suspended pending further investigation for possible termination of employment/privileges/services. Questions should be directed to Human Resources.

**For More Information:**

**Q. Where can I go for more information about the influenza vaccine?**

A. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — Influenza (Flu).