

COVID-19 Vaccine Requirement Policy FAQs

Updated as of Aug. 23, 2021

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Policy Overview (why, when, who, what)

Q1. Why is PeaceHealth requiring caregivers to get the COVID-19 vaccine or submit a qualifying medical exemption?

If you are medically able, getting one of the COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in the U.S. is the safest, most effective way to protect yourself from the worst effects of the virus and to reduce the likelihood of transmitting the virus to your co-workers, patients or loved ones. It's part of our Mission to promote personal *and* community health and provide safe care for every patient. (Orig. pub. Aug. 3, 2021)

Q2. Why is PeaceHealth implementing this requirement now? Why didn't PeaceHealth do this when the vaccines first rolled out?

The rapid spread of new COVID-19 variants is a public health emergency that has changed circumstances dramatically as compared with the less virulent variants in circulation when the vaccines first rolled out. The variants are spreading rapidly across the U.S. and in the communities we serve, resulting in increased COVID-19 [cases and hospitalizations](#) now and potentially into the fall. The new variants appear to have a "[viral load](#)" as much as [1,000 times higher than prior variants and, as a result, may be at least twice as transmissible](#). They may also be more harmful and – in the rare cases of breakthrough infections – [can be transmitted from vaccinated individuals](#). (Orig. pub. Aug. 3)

Q3. Why is PeaceHealth requiring additional masking and COVID-19 testing for unvaccinated caregivers?

Unvaccinated caregivers are at higher risk for carrying—and transmitting—the COVID-19 virus. New variants have amplified this danger, as they are even more transmissible. Additional levels of masking and COVID-19 testing are necessary to reduce the likelihood of caregivers transmitting COVID-19 to patients (who are often medically vulnerable) and other caregivers. (Orig. pub. Aug. 3)

Q4. Why is the deadline Aug. 31, 2021? Why isn't there more time to implement it?

The rapid spread of new COVID-19 variants is a public health emergency. Recent projections from OHSU show a steep upward curve in COVID-19 hospitalizations peaking in mid- to late-September. More people vaccinated before that time means fewer people who are likely to need hospitalization. Waiting to implement the policy

increases the likelihood that the new variants will cause staffing shortages due to caregivers becoming ill at the same time as new variants are causing a surge in hospitalization. It also increases the potential for unvaccinated caregivers to transmit the virus to patients. (Orig. pub. Aug. 9)

Q5. Will PeaceHealth require patients and visitors to be vaccinated as well?

We strongly encourage vaccination for any patient or visitor for whom it is medically advisable. Vaccines are the best way to protect oneself and others in the community. Patients cannot be required to be vaccinated. As public health circumstances warrant, requirements for visitors—for example, masking, vaccination, or eliminating visitation entirely—are or may be necessary. (Orig. pub. Aug. 5)

Q6. Does this policy affect both unionized caregivers and non-unionized caregivers?

The COVID-19 Vaccine Requirement Policy applies equally to all caregivers, represented or not. PeaceHealth is currently reaching out to unions to discuss this new requirement and will regularly communicate with represented caregivers as those conversations continue. (Orig. pub. Aug. 5)

Q7. Does this policy apply to people who are not employed by PeaceHealth but are routinely working in our facilities?

Yes. This policy applies to all healthcare workers, including providers, students, contractors, vendors, and volunteers serving in our healthcare settings. (Orig. pub. Aug. 3)

Q8. Does this policy apply to travelers? Have their agencies been notified?

This policy applies to all caregivers at all PeaceHealth facilities, including travelers, whose agencies were notified on Aug. 3, along with other caregivers, contractors, vendors, and volunteers. (Orig. pub. Aug. 9)

Q9. I work remotely: Do any of these requirements apply to me?

Caregivers approved for remote work must comply with the new policy and either be vaccinated or submit a qualifying exemption on or before Aug. 31. ~~If you do not do so, you will be subject to disciplinary action in consultation with Human Resources. If you do submit a qualifying exemption by Aug. 31, all other requirements—currently, masking, distancing, and testing—will apply to you if you access a PeaceHealth facility.~~ (Orig. pub. Aug. 3) **UPDATE:** After Aug. 31, unvaccinated caregivers without an approved exemption will be placed on unpaid leave and subjected to corrective action up to and including termination. If you are approved for a qualifying exemption, *currently work 100% remotely*, and never enter a PeaceHealth facility, you may remain working remotely. (Updated Aug. 16)

Q10. My work is 100% remote. Why does the policy require me to be vaccinated?

PeaceHealth's Mission calls us to promote personal and community health. We believe it is imperative for those who are medically able to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Doing so protects you personally and reduces the likelihood you will transmit the virus and cause harm to community members you come into contact with, wherever you come in contact with them. Please also refer to ["If a caregiver already has COVID-19 antibodies, why are they still required to get vaccinated?"](#) (Orig. pub. Aug. 5)

Q11. If I received my first dose of the vaccine but did not receive a second dose, do I have to start over to meet the requirements of the policy?

You must have received a complete series of vaccine doses (one dose of Johnson & Johnson; two doses of Pfizer or Moderna) and achieved full efficacy (two weeks after the last dose) to meet policy requirements. According to the [CDC](#), you do not have to restart the vaccine series if you receive your second shot of the COVID-19 vaccine later than advised. It is recommended that you get your second shot as close to the three-week or four-week interval as possible. With limited exceptions, COVID-19 vaccines are not interchangeable. You should try to get your second dose of the same vaccine type/manufacturer from the original provider of your first dose. Remember to bring your vaccination card with you when you go in for your second dose. (Orig. pub. Aug. 5)

Q12. Does the policy apply to unvaccinated caregivers who have had COVID-19?

All caregivers are subject to the vaccination requirements in this policy regardless of whether you already had COVID-19. Prior COVID-19 infection alone is not a qualifying medical exemption. Vaccines can be given safely to, and are generally recommended for, people with evidence of a prior infection. People with a current infection should defer vaccination (first or second dose) until they recover from acute illness and meet [CDC criteria for ending isolation](#). Please also refer to "[I work remotely: Do any of these requirements apply to me?](#)" (Orig. pub. Aug. 5)

Q13. Can patients request to receive care only from vaccinated caregivers?

PeaceHealth is committed to ensuring that every caregiver provides the highest quality, safest possible care. Nearly 80% of PeaceHealth caregivers are already vaccinated. We anticipate that number will increase with this policy requiring vaccination for anyone who is medically able. The policy is supplemented by others – including enhanced masking, physical distancing, and regular COVID-19 testing – that maximize safety for vaccinated caregivers as well as the small number of caregivers who have qualified medical exemptions. (Orig. pub. Aug. 3)

Q14. Do all available vaccines (Johnson & Johnson) meet the requirement, or just the two-dose Moderna and Pfizer vaccines?

All three vaccines COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in the U.S. – Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson – meet the requirement of the COVID-19 Vaccine Requirement Policy. (Orig. pub. Aug. 3)

Q15. Does PeaceHealth receive any financial incentives to support vaccination?

No. Taxpayer funds were used to develop and purchase COVID-19 vaccine doses, which is why they are now available for free. Some hospitals and health systems are charging insurers for vaccine administration. PeaceHealth currently is not. PeaceHealth has thus far incurred more than \$5M in unreimbursed costs for administering the vaccines to caregivers and our communities. (Orig. pub. Aug. 9)

Getting Vaccinated

Q16. What is the process for providing proof of vaccination?

You can submit a copy of your COVID-19 vaccination card to Employee Health at employeehealth@peacehealth.org. A scanned or photographed image is acceptable. (Orig. pub. Aug. 3)

Q17. Where can I get vaccinated?

You can get vaccinated anywhere that offers an FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccines are widely available and are currently free. You can:

- Visit peacehealth.org/coronavirus, choose your state, and view PeaceHealth clinic locations near you. You can often schedule online or call to schedule an appointment. If you let clinic staff know you're a PeaceHealth employee, they will do everything they can to fast-track your vaccination appointment.
- Find other locations based on your zip code and vaccine type/manufacturer preference at <https://www.vaccines.gov/> or by following county-specific links at the above site. (Orig. pub. Aug. 5)

Q18. I received my COVID-19 vaccine at a PHMG clinic. Why do I need to submit a vaccination record to Employee Health?

Your caregiver health record with PeaceHealth is separate and distinct from your personal health record, which may be maintained by PeaceHealth or another provider from whom you have received care. For understandable privacy reasons, your personal health record information is not shared with any employer, including PeaceHealth, without appropriate consent or a lawful purpose. To meet the requirements of this policy, take a photo of your vaccination record (CDC form preferred) and email it to employeehealth@peacehealth.org. (Orig. pub. Aug. 5)

Q19. When and how do fully vaccinated caregivers receive their badge stickers?

After your complete vaccination series has been recorded with Employee Health and you have progressed past the window for achieving full vaccine efficacy (two weeks after the last dose), you are eligible to receive a badge sticker indicating COVID-19 vaccination. For example, if you do not receive your second dose until Aug. 31, you will not receive a badge sticker until Sept. 15. Badge stickers may be provided by your supervisor, through Employee Health, or at facility entry points, depending on location. Remote workers who never enter PeaceHealth facilities do not need to request (and will not be issued) badge stickers until/unless their job duties require entry to a PeaceHealth facility. (Orig. pub. Aug. 5)

Q20. Which COVID-19 vaccines are available at PeaceHealth?

PeaceHealth is currently administering the [Pfizer and Moderna vaccines](#). The type of vaccine being administered varies by PeaceHealth location and is subject to change. Contact individual clinics to learn which vaccine they are currently administering. (Orig. pub. Aug. 9)

Q21. Can contracted personnel and other non-employees receive a vaccine at PeaceHealth free of charge?

Yes, and they can also be vaccinated at other community sites. (Orig. pub. Aug. 9)

Q22. Will PeaceHealth be offering vaccine clinics like we did earlier this year?

Given the relatively small percentage of caregivers who have not yet been vaccinated, distribution through PeaceHealth clinics is currently the most effective way to serve our community. In addition, caregivers can access numerous other sites (see www.vaccines.gov), including locations that offer the Johnson & Johnson single-dose vaccine. (Orig. pub. Aug. 9)

Q23. Do we have adequate vaccine inventory to ensure all our caregivers can receive both of their scheduled vaccines?

PeaceHealth clinics will do everything they can to accommodate caregivers' vaccination needs, but vaccines are also widely available at other locations. You can search based on your zip code and vaccine type/manufacturer preference at <https://www.vaccines.gov/>. (Orig. pub. Aug. 9)

Submitting Qualifying Exemptions

Q24. What conditions qualify for a medical exemption?

Details about the medical exemption are included on the [medical exemption form](#). Exemptions will be reviewed by Employee Health based on submitted information in the form and, as appropriate, in consultation with that individual's provider. If your exemption qualifies, you will be subject to requirements for unvaccinated caregivers. (Orig. pub. Aug. 5)

Q25. What documentation do I need to provide to request a medical exemption?

A [medical exemption form](#) and qualifying documentation must be submitted on or before Aug. 31, 2021. If you completed a declination form previously, you still need to submit a qualifying medical exemption form with the additional required documentation. Submit forms to Employee Health at employeehealth@peacehealth.org. If your exemption is accepted, you will be subject to requirements for unvaccinated caregivers. (Orig. pub. Aug. 3)

Q26. Can caregivers submit a religious exemption?

The new variants of COVID-19 are a public health emergency that pose a critical threat to those unable to be vaccinated. Very few religious denominations explicitly prohibit vaccinations. We believe the common good is a moral imperative that requires those who are medically able to get a COVID-19 vaccine. If a caregiver has a religious objection to getting vaccinated, they should notify their supervisor. In consultation with Human Resources, such situations will be reviewed as to whether we need to and can reasonably accommodate a religious exemption on a case-by-case basis. (Orig. pub. Aug. 3)

Q27. How do I submit a religious exemption?

If a caregiver has a religious objection to getting vaccinated, they can submit their objection in writing to their supervisor, who will work with Human Resources to review each request on a case-by-case basis and see if the caregiver's concerns can be reasonably accommodated. (Orig. pub. Aug. 9)

Q28. What about the exemption afforded in Oregon by ORS 433.416?

The transmissibility of new COVID-19 variants requires emergency action to protect our caregivers, patients, and communities. PeaceHealth expects Oregon will align with other states in mandating the COVID-19 vaccine for healthcare workers, subject to medical and religious exemptions, and is implementing this policy to address imminent and ongoing threats to public health. (Orig. pub. Aug. 3)

Q29. How does Oregon Gov. Kate Brown's Aug. 4, 2021, announcement affect PeaceHealth's policy?

Recognizing that emergency action was needed, on Aug. 4, 2021, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown announced that the Oregon Health Authority is implementing regulations requiring healthcare workers to confirm their COVID-19 vaccination status and subjecting those not vaccinated to regular testing. These new actions align with the action PeaceHealth is taking. (Orig. pub. Aug. 5)

Q30. If I have a medical exemption, doesn't the visibility of the N95 mask violate my right to medical privacy?

No. N95 masks are available to any caregiver who chooses to wear one in the patient care setting and are required for safety reasons other than vaccination status. A caregiver is welcome to share the reason they are wearing an N95 mask with co-workers or patients but is not required to do so. In addition, vaccination status recorded in your employment record –which may be required by an employee – is not considered protected health information and is not covered by HIPAA. For PeaceHealth, status about vaccines like tetanus, influenza, or COVID-19 help us understand which caregivers require a different level of PPE to help keep them – and our patients – safe. (Orig. pub. Aug. 3)

Q31. Will caregivers be terminated if they choose neither to be vaccinated nor to submit a qualifying exemption?

~~If you choose neither to be vaccinated nor to submit a qualifying exemption on or before Aug. 31, 2021, you may be placed on unpaid leave. The exceptions to this are people who have a qualifying exemption and work in a non-patient care area (including remotely) or the relatively few circumstances in which a non-patient care role is available for someone who typically works in a direct patient care area and has a qualifying exemption. If you have a qualifying exemption and work in a PeaceHealth facility in a non-patient care area, you will be subject to additional requirements, including masking, physical distancing, and testing. (Orig. pub. Aug. 16)~~ **UPDATE:** After Aug. 31, unvaccinated caregivers without an approved exemption will be placed on unpaid leave and subjected to corrective action up to and including termination. PTO may not be used. (Updated Aug. 18)

Q32. If my exemption does not qualify, can I choose to get vaccinated and continue employment?

If you are notified that your exemption request does not qualify, you can meet the requirements of the policy by becoming vaccinated. If a vaccination series is in progress, caregivers will be subject to requirements for those not fully vaccinated until the vaccine achieves full efficacy, 14 days after the final dose. (Orig. pub. Aug. 16) **UPDATE:** To comply with the policy, vaccination must start be started on or before Aug. 31, 2021. (Updated Aug. 18)

Requirements After Aug. 31

Q33. What happens if I choose to get vaccinated but have only received my first dose before the Aug. 31, 2021 deadline?

~~If you have not received your second dose before the Aug. 31, 2021, deadline, you will be subject to disciplinary action in consultation with Human Resources. (Orig. pub. Aug. 3)~~ **UPDATE:** If by Aug. 31, 2021, you have received your first dose of a two-dose vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) and have your second dose scheduled or are in the 14-day window for achieving full efficacy of any vaccine (including Johnson & Johnson), you will be permitted to continue working in your current role subject to other requirements (masking, physical distancing, testing), as applicable. (Updated Aug. 16) **UPDATE:** Full vaccination – indicated by a badge sticker – must be achieved on or before Oct. 15, 2021. (Updated Aug. 18)

Q34. What happens if I can't get my second vaccine dose until after Aug. 31?

You must have received a complete series of vaccine doses (one dose of Johnson & Johnson; two doses of Pfizer or Moderna) to meet policy requirements. Anyone who is not fully vaccinated and for whom the vaccine has not yet achieved full efficacy (two weeks after the last dose) will need to adhere to additional requirements (currently including masking, physical distancing, potential reassignment, and COVID-19 testing) until they get their badge sticker. (Orig. pub. Aug. 5) **UPDATE:** Full vaccination—indicated by a badge sticker—must be achieved on or before Oct. 15, 2021. (Updated Aug. 18)

Q35. If I DO NOT get vaccinated and DO NOT have an approved medical exemption, how am I impacted?

~~If you are not vaccinated and do not have a qualified exemption on file with Employee Health by Aug. 31, 2021, you will be subject to disciplinary action in consultation with Human Resources and removed from clinical schedules (where applicable). Your supervisor will be responsible for these actions. (Orig. pub. Aug. 3)~~ **UPDATE:** After Aug. 31, unvaccinated caregivers without an approved exemption will be placed on unpaid leave and subjected to corrective action up to and including termination. PTO may not be used. (Updated Aug. 18)

Q36. If I DO NOT get vaccinated but DO have an approved medical exemption, how am I impacted?

~~If you are not vaccinated but have a qualified medical exemption on file with Employee Health by Aug. 31, 2021, the following requirements will be enforced by your supervisor:~~

- ~~▪ **Masking** – Wearing a Level 3 surgical mask in all PeaceHealth facilities and wearing an N95 mask in all PeaceHealth facilities in areas/departments where patient care occurs.~~
- ~~▪ **Physical distancing** – Maintaining proper physical distancing.~~
- ~~▪ **Potential reassignment to non-patient care areas.** On a case-by-case basis, unvaccinated caregivers may be reassigned to areas without direct patient care.~~
- ~~▪ **Testing** – Receiving a regular COVID-19 test. Details about the COVID-19 testing process will be provided to caregivers who have an approved exemption. Caregivers who test positive for COVID-19 will be removed from direct patient care roles, consistent with current practice. (Orig. pub. Aug. 3)~~

UPDATE: Based on the latest data about the accelerating public health emergency caused by transmission of new COVID-19 variants, PeaceHealth has made the clinical determination that contact between unvaccinated caregivers and patients, caregivers, or other community members in our facilities poses an unacceptable health and safety risk.

If you currently work in a PeaceHealth facility in any role, your supervisor will work with HR to determine if your role can be performed 100% remotely or if another accommodation can be made, including a leave of absence. PTO may be used for such leaves. This assessment will be completed as soon as possible. The results will be provided to you so you can determine appropriate next steps.

If you currently work 100% remotely and never enter a PeaceHealth facility, you may remain working remotely. (Updated Aug. 18)

Q37. What are “areas/departments where patient care occurs”?

Areas/departments where patient care occurs include areas where patients are likely to be cared for clinically. This includes areas of traditional patient contact (triage, exam rooms, patient rooms, surgical suites, etc.). (Orig. pub. Aug. 3)

Q38. Can caregivers still work in their department if they are NOT vaccinated and the department is in a non-patient care area?

~~All caregivers must comply with the policy and either be vaccinated or submit a qualifying exemption on or before Aug. 31, 2021. Caregivers working in a PeaceHealth facility in non-patient care departments who have a qualifying medical exemption will not be reassigned as a result of this policy, but they are subject to the masking, physical distancing, and testing requirements. (Orig. pub. Aug. 9)~~ **UPDATE:** Based on the latest data about the accelerating public health emergency caused by transmission of new COVID-19 variants, PeaceHealth has made the clinical determination that contact between unvaccinated caregivers and patients, caregivers, or other community members in our facilities poses an unacceptable health and safety risk.

If you currently work in a PeaceHealth facility in any role and were approved for an exemption, your supervisor will work with HR to determine if your role can be performed 100% remotely or if another accommodation can be made, including a leave of absence. PTO may be used for such leaves. This assessment will be completed as soon as possible. The results will be provided to you so you can determine the appropriate next steps.

If you currently work 100% remotely, were approved for an exemption, and never enter a PeaceHealth facility, you may remain working remotely. (Updated Aug. 23)

Vaccine Safety & Efficacy

For additional questions related to the safety, efficacy, and potential side effects of COVID-19 vaccines, please visit the [PeaceHealth Coronavirus FAQ](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#).

Q39. How can PeaceHealth require caregivers to get vaccinated if COVID-19 vaccines only have Emergency Use Authorization (EUA)?

PeaceHealth provides the option to submit a qualifying exemption, so vaccination is not required for all caregivers. However, vaccination is required for those who do not have a medical exemption. With hundreds of millions of doses delivered and many months of real-world evidence to draw from, the vaccines have proved safe and effective. Based on this evidence, it is highly likely the FDA will fully authorize each of the vaccines currently under EUA, but in the interim – based on guidance from the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#) and applicable laws, and on the public health emergency we are facing – PeaceHealth has determined that moving forward with this new policy is in the best interest of our patients. (Orig. pub. Aug. 3) **UPDATE:** On Aug. 23, 2021, the FDA announced that they granted Pfizer full authorization for its COVID-19 vaccine for people 16 years old and older. The vaccine is still available under emergency use authorization for people ages 12-15. Full authorization means that the FDA has reviewed all of the data submitted by the manufacturer following a Phase 3 clinical trial and concluded the vaccine is safe for use. The FDA requires manufacturers to continue monitoring for safety. (Orig. pub. Aug. 23)

Q40. Why has the FDA only approved the vaccines for emergency use?

Vaccines go through a rigorous process that requires manufacturers to compile volumes of data before full approval is granted by the FDA. Because of the ongoing pandemic, an Emergency Use Authorization was granted for the three currently available vaccines. Based on the overwhelming evidence of safety from the hundreds of millions of doses delivered so far in the U.S., full FDA approval is highly likely. In the meantime, the CDC has stated that the vaccines' known and potential benefits outweigh their known *and potential* risks. Pfizer filed an application in early May for full approval, ~~and it may be granted as early as September.~~ Moderna filed an application for full approval in early June and is still submitting the required data for approval. Johnson & Johnson has not yet filed but expects to do so before the end of the year. (Orig. pub. Aug. 9) **UPDATE:** On Aug. 23, 2021, the FDA announced that they granted Pfizer full authorization for its COVID-19 vaccine for people 16 years old and older. The vaccine is still available under emergency use authorization for people ages 12-15. Full authorization means that the FDA has reviewed all of the data submitted by the manufacturer following a Phase 3 clinical trial and concluded the vaccine is safe for use. The FDA requires manufacturers to continue monitoring for safety. (Orig. pub. Aug. 23)

Q41. Do I need to get a booster to meet the requirements of the policy?

~~PeaceHealth's COVID-19 Vaccine Requirement Policy is based on current CDC guidance. The CDC is not currently recommending boosters. We will continue to monitor the advice of the CDC and revise our policies as needed to ensure the safety of our caregivers and the communities we serve. (Orig. pub. Aug. 5)~~

UPDATE: On Aug. 13, the CDC updated its guidance for immunocompromised people and [now recommends](#) that moderately to severely immunocompromised people who initially received two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines receive a third dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine at least 28 days after a second dose. (Updated Aug. 16)

Q42. Does being vaccinated reduce the chance of spreading the COVID-19 virus to others? If yes, is that true for the Delta variant?

The vaccines currently available in the U.S. are the best protection against COVID-19. Getting vaccinated significantly reduces the likelihood of severe illness, hospitalization, or death. This appears to be true for the Delta variant as well. Early evidence indicated that the vaccines also effectively reduced the virus transmission from vaccinated persons, primarily because they effectively prevented illness. No vaccine is 100% effective, however, and a vaccine that is 90% effective will still result in 10% of people becoming ill. Although the available vaccines all appear to be effective against the Delta variant, preliminary evidence suggests that the small percentage of vaccinated people who do become ill with the Delta variant can still spread it to others. (Orig. pub. Aug. 9)

Q43. Does the vaccine have any effects on fertility?

According to the CDC, there is no evidence that female or male fertility problems are a side effect of *any* vaccine, including the authorized COVID-19 vaccines. However, some research studies suggest that getting COVID-19—the virus, not the vaccine—can affect sperm quality, potentially contributing to certain people's infertility concerns. Therefore, the virus itself may pose a greater risk to fertility than the vaccine. Those who are trying to become pregnant do not need to avoid pregnancy after COVID-19 vaccination. For more information, please visit the CDC's [Myths and Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines](#). (Orig. pub. Aug. 9)

Q44. Are pregnant caregivers or those currently breastfeeding required to receive the vaccine, or do they qualify for a medical exemption?

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, a COVID-19 vaccine can help protect you from severe illness, which is more likely among pregnant and recently pregnant people than non-pregnant people. There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 vaccination causes any problems with pregnancy, including the development of the placenta. Additionally, based on how these vaccines work in the body, COVID-19 vaccines are thought not to be a risk to lactating people or their breastfeeding babies. Recent reports have shown that breastfeeding people who have received COVID-19 mRNA vaccines have antibodies in their breastmilk, which could help protect their babies. More data are needed to determine what protection these antibodies may provide to the baby. It is recommended that you speak with your primary care and/or OB/GYN provider, but consultation is not required for vaccination. For more information, please visit the CDC's [Myths and Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines](#), and please also refer to the above ["What conditions qualify for a medical exemption?"](#) (Orig. pub. Aug. 9)

UPDATE: On Aug. 11, the CDC updated its [guidance for pregnant women](#) by stating that evidence about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy, although limited, has been growing. The data suggest that the benefits of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine outweigh any known or potential risks of vaccination during pregnancy. (Updated Aug. 16)

Q45. Since the vaccines have only been available for a short time, how do we know what their long-term health effects might be?

The CDC continues to closely monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines and notes that serious side effects that could cause long-term health problems are extremely unlikely following any vaccination, including COVID-19. Vaccine monitoring has historically shown that side effects generally happen within six weeks of receiving a vaccine dose. For this reason, the FDA required each of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines to be studied for at least two months (eight weeks) after the final dose. Hundreds of millions of people have received COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in the U.S., and no long-term side effects have been detected in the more than eight months since the vaccines were made widely available. (Orig. pub. Aug. 9)

Q46. The Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System seems to show a lot of adverse events from the vaccine—should I be concerned?

According to the CDC, serious adverse events after COVID-19 vaccination are very rare but may occur. Reports of adverse events to the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System \(VAERS\)](#) do not necessarily mean that a vaccine caused a health problem. That determination is made by vaccine experts upon reviewing reported events. CDC's [summary of known adverse events](#) from COVID-19 vaccines administered in the U.S. shows that serious adverse events are exceptionally rare and supports the statement that the vaccines are safe and effective. (Orig. pub. Aug. 9)

Q47. If a caregiver already has COVID-19 antibodies, why are they still required to get vaccinated?

The CDC recommends people get vaccinated regardless of whether they already had COVID-19. [Current evidence](#) suggests that the risk of reinfection is low in the months after initial infection but may increase with time due to waning immunity. Studies have shown that vaccination provides a strong boost in protection in people who have recovered from COVID-19. A CDC study released on Aug. 6, 2021, confirmed the comparative effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines versus natural immunity, including immunity gained from prior COVID-19 infection. Please also refer to [“Does the policy apply to unvaccinated caregivers who have had COVID-19?”](#) (Orig. pub. Aug. 9)

Q48. If the vaccine was developed before the variants, how do the current vaccines address the variants?

According to the CDC, the COVID-19 vaccines authorized in the United States are highly effective at preventing severe disease and death, including against the Delta variant and other known variants. But they are not 100% effective, and some fully vaccinated people will become infected (breakthrough infection) and experience illness. For such people, the vaccine still provides strong protection against serious illness and death. (Orig. pub. Aug. 16)

Related HR Policies

- Q49. If I decide to get vaccinated, what do I do if I experience vaccine side effects that require me to miss work?**
 First, please review the [Post COVID-19 Vaccine Return to Work Instructions for Caregivers](#). In the event that you experience symptoms that impact your ability to work, you can use your standard PTO bank hours. The COVID-19 paid sick-time bank sunsetted on June 30, 2021, as previously announced in March 2021, after more than six months of availability and ready access to safe, effective vaccines. (Orig. pub. Aug. 3)
- Q50. Will PeaceHealth provide additional leave for me to get vaccinated?**
 You can use accrued PTO or arrange a vaccination appointment during non-work hours. Additional leave is not available for vaccination. Please also refer to [“If I decide to get vaccinated, what do I do if I experience vaccine side effects that require me to miss work?”](#) (Orig. pub. Aug. 5)
- Q51. What is PeaceHealth doing to reduce the stigma that can be associated with choosing to not get the vaccine?**
 As a healthcare organization, we advocate for everyone to receive the vaccine (except those with qualifying medical exemptions). We recognize that getting the vaccine is a choice. Our [Behavioral Standards](#) describe how we can each stay accountable to each other as we carry out our Mission. We trust you to treat each person in a loving and caring way, no matter their choices or circumstances. (Orig. pub. Aug. 3)
- Q52. Will PeaceHealth offer any incentives (cash or rewards) for people to become vaccinated?**
 PeaceHealth has no plans to offer additional incentives for vaccination. (Orig. pub. Aug. 9)
- Q53. Will the new policy impact staffing at PeaceHealth medical centers?**
 The number of caregivers who choose neither to be vaccinated nor to submit a qualified exemption is likely to be very small, so significant staffing impacts are not anticipated. Staffing impacts from *not* implementing a policy like this—because of unvaccinated caregivers becoming ill from new, extremely contagious variants of the virus and potentially exposing others as a result—would likely be much more severe. (Orig. pub. Aug. 5)
- Q54. After the policy goes into effect, can an unvaccinated caregiver without a qualifying exemption use PTO if they are removed from the schedule and/or put on unpaid administrative leave?**
 After the policy goes into effect, unvaccinated caregivers without an approved exemption will be placed on unpaid leave and subjected to corrective action up to and including termination. PTO may not be used for unpaid leave. (Orig. pub. Aug. 16)

Q55. If a caregiver was on family or other leave or on PTO when the policy was announced, does the Aug. 31 deadline for the policy still apply?

The policy applies to all caregivers, including caregivers returning from PTO and/or protected leave: Everyone must either be vaccinated or submit a qualifying exemption. If a vaccination series is in progress, caregivers will be subject to requirements for those not fully vaccinated until the vaccine achieves full efficacy, 14 days after the final dose. (Orig. pub. Aug. 16)