

Medical West Seasonal Flu Vaccination

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Medical West Seasonal Flu Vaccination Policy?

Effective October 1, 2017, all Medical West employees are required to get an annual seasonal flu vaccination. For the 2017- 2018 flu season, employees must provide proof of compliance by **December 1, 2017**.

2. Who does the new Flu Vaccination Policy apply to?

The Medical West Seasonal Flu Vaccination Policy applies to **all Medical West employees**, physicians and volunteers as of October 1, 2017 or later. This includes full-time, part-time, PRN or any other employment capacity within Medical West and its affiliated physician practices.

3. Why is Medical West implementing a flu vaccination policy?

Medical West is dedicated to the preservation of health and prevention of disease among our employees, visitors and patients. Influenza is a virus that can cause a serious infection that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death. Each flu season is unique; every year, millions of people get the flu, hundreds of thousands of people are hospitalized, and tens of thousands of people die from flu-related causes. Influenza affects people differently as even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others. You can get the flu from patients and coworkers who are sick with the flu and if you get it, you can spread it to others without even feeling sick.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), and the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC) recommend that all U.S. health care workers get vaccinated annually against influenza – **even those not directly involved in patient care** but potentially exposed to infectious agents which can be transmitted to and from health care workers and patients.

By getting vaccinated, you are not only protecting yourself, but also your family members, your co-workers and our patients. With your participation, Medical West will be a safer environment for our patients, their family members and our employees.

4. What do you need to do to comply with the new policy for the 2017 flu season?

Employees must provide proof of vaccination by December 1, 2017. Any requests for exemptions must be submitted to Employee Health by November 1, 2017 to allow adequate time for review. Reasons for requesting exemption include:

- Religious Beliefs - a request for a religious exemption should be supported, in writing, as to the reason for such an accommodation. This documentation is often provided by the employee's religious spiritual leader or religious scholar who is aware of the religious belief or practice.
- Medical Concerns - a request for a medical exemption because of a severe or life-threatening allergy to flu vaccine or any ingredient in the vaccine must be supported, in writing, by your health care provider.

5. What will happen if I do not comply with the new policy by December 1, 2017?

Employees that fail to comply with the Seasonal Flu Vaccination Policy will not be eligible for any applicable and earned merit pay or rate increase effective in 2017.

6. When and where will the flu vaccine be offered?

Employee Health will be providing the influenza vaccine free of charge to all Medical West employees beginning Monday, October 2, 2017. Employee Health will also hold flu vaccination drives throughout the Hospital, Clinics and other campus buildings during October and November. Additional opportunities will be offered during the Employee Wellness Screenings beginning October 4, 2017.

7. Do I have to get my flu vaccine at Medical West?

No. You have the option to get the flu vaccine at your doctor's office, a retail pharmacy, or another location. However, to ensure we have record of your compliance, you must submit a document to Employee Health from the provider/pharmacy that provided your flu vaccine. Medical West will not reimburse for any co-pay or other expense incurred in obtaining compliance documentation or receiving the vaccination from another provider.

8. Will I have to pay for the flu vaccine?

No. The flu vaccine will be offered to Medical West employees free of charge by Employee Health.

9. I do not have any patient contact, do I need to have the flu vaccine?

Yes. Individuals not directly involved in patient care (e.g., clerical, dietary, housekeeping, laundry, security, maintenance, administrative, billing, volunteers, etc.) may still be potentially exposed to infectious agents which can transmit the flu to or contract the flu from other health care workers and patients. Wherever you work, there is still the possibility that you can expose others to the disease or be exposed yourself.

10. Is it true the flu vaccine can give you the flu?

No. Receiving the flu vaccine will not give anyone the flu. The basic flu shot uses an inactivated virus, which cannot transmit the flu. However, you may experience some side effects which include soreness, redness, swelling, low-grade fever, and aches that may last 1 to 2 days, but this is a normal reaction to any vaccination. It is not the flu.

11. If I get the flu vaccine am I guaranteed to not get the flu?

While the flu vaccine is not 100% effective, it is designed to be effective against the flu strains most likely to be encountered in a given year. Receiving the flu vaccine will also decrease the severity of one's symptoms if they still contract the flu.

12. How will potential applicants know about this policy prior to completing the application or accepting employment with Medical West?

Information related to this requirement for Medical West employees will be posted on Medical West's Careers website (www.medicalwesthospital.org/careers) where applicants would search to view open positions at Medical West.

13. Will new employees hired after October 1, 2017 be required to get a flu vaccine?

Yes. Individuals hired after the policy is implemented will be required to have a flu shot if hired between October 1, 2017 – March 31, 2018. The flu shot will be offered as a part of the health screening for all new employees. If the individual has had the flu vaccine, documentation will be required for compliance.

14. Does the new policy affect me if I am currently off work on approved leave, with or without pay?

Yes. The expectation is for all Medical West employees, physicians and volunteers to obtain the flu vaccine. Individuals can obtain the vaccine while on leave at Employee Health, their physician's office or at a local pharmacy. Employees will have a 30-day extension upon return from any approved leave of absence to obtain the flu vaccine if needed.

15. What if I get the vaccine and still get the flu?

As with any illness, if an employee contracts the flu, he/she should see their primary care physician/provider to determine if you have the flu. Once a diagnosis is provided, follow his/her instructions for treatment of the flu and how long you need to be off work and when you may return to work. A physicians/health care provider's release to return to work will be required prior to clocking in for duty.

16. What else can I do to prevent the flu?

The **single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated**, but good health habits like covering your cough and **washing your hands** often can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu.

17. Who do I contact if I have questions about the new mandatory flu vaccine policy?

If you have questions about the new mandatory flu vaccine policy, please speak with your manager or Human Resources.