

## Influenza vaccine requirement Q&A

The University of California has had established vaccination requirements for its students to maintain the health and safety of our community. This year, out of concern for the potential for very serious or life-threatening illness in the campus community caused by anticipated simultaneous widespread community transmission of both influenza and COVID-19, the university has added the influenza vaccine to its list of required vaccines for fall 2020.

Getting a flu vaccine is one of the most critical steps students and others can take to protect their own health and do their part in supporting their community during the global health crisis. By getting vaccinated for influenza, students will significantly decrease the chances that they will become ill with flu this fall, and also help ease the burden on the health care system, ensuring that those critically ill with COVID-19 and other life-threatening health concerns are able to receive the care they need.

The cost of the vaccine to students will be covered by all ACA-compliant medical insurance plans, including the UC Student Health Insurance Plan (UC SHIP). Vaccinations are expected to be widely available throughout the state at local retail pharmacies and other locations near to where students may be residing, as well as through campus health centers.

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#### Why are you requiring the flu vaccine for students this year?

This is an important action to protect the health and well-being of our students during this unprecedented public health crisis.

Evidence has shown a high attack rate of influenza in young adults - they are more than twice as likely as someone 65 or older to develop a symptomatic flu infection.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), flu vaccination among adults is effective in preventing the most severe forms of flu and reducing the risk of becoming sick enough to require treatment at the hospital or ICU.

Along with protecting an individual's own health from potentially serious complications from the flu, influenza vaccination may also reduce the likelihood that flu-related health complications might significantly worsen the severity of subsequent or concurrent illness from COVID-19. In addition, high levels of vaccination within our communities will decrease the burden on health care providers and hospital systems struggling to provide critically needed care during the pandemic. Together with UC's existing vaccination requirements, adding the influenza vaccine requirement will help protect not only our students, staff and faculty but all of our communities and our state.

**When do students need to get the flu vaccine?**

Students are required to receive their vaccine by November 1, 2020.

**How can students get the flu vaccine?**

Students can get their flu vaccine at retail pharmacies near their campuses or homes, doctor's offices/medical clinics or at the Student Health Services clinics at all UC campuses.

**What is the cost of the flu vaccine for students?**

All ACA-compliant medical insurance plans, including the UC Student Health Insurance Plan (UC SHIP), cover influenza vaccination at no cost to the individual.

**How will students provide proof that they have received their flu shot?**

Students will report their influenza vaccination through their Student Health Services Portals, where they also provide evidence of their other required vaccinations.

**Does this apply to graduate and professional school students as well?**

Yes. This requirement applies to all students in graduate or undergraduate programs at UC.

**Are there other changes to the immunization policy?**

Other aspects of the immunization policy remain unchanged. This simply amends the University's existing policy with the additional requirement that all students receive an influenza vaccination this fall before November 1, 2020.

**Is this a permanent change to the immunization policy? Will students be required to get the flu vaccine from now on?**

That is yet to be determined. The new requirement is based on the University's assessment of the current situation in consultation with public health officials and will be revisited every season.

**Will exemptions be allowed?**

Medical exemption requests will be handled in accordance with procedures in the [University's immunization policy](#). The policy establishes that any request for medical exemptions must be submitted to the medical director of Student Health Services at the campus at which the student is enrolled.

**If a student will only participate in remote instruction this fall will they need to document immunization by the deadline?**

Yes, all students should receive a flu vaccine, or submit documentation from their health care provider that provides evidence of a medical exemption for influenza, by November 1, 2020, regardless of whether the student is attending classes remotely or in-person.

**Is there a penalty or consequence for students if they do not get a flu shot?**

Consistent with UC's other immunization policies, class enrollment registrations for the academic term beginning in January 2021 will not be allowed for students who have not reported their vaccination by the November 1, 2020, deadline.

**When will this year's flu vaccine be available?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has not yet confirmed timing for the release of this year's flu vaccine. UC student health centers will notify the campus community once they receive inventories of this year's vaccine. Students may also receive vaccinations from their health care provider or at retail pharmacies, or their private doctors' offices with costs covered by all ACA-compliant insurance plans, including UC SHIP.

**How will student health clinics deliver the vaccinations given the social distancing requirements that may impact the usual vaccination fairs?**

Student health clinics at each campus are working in consultation with their local public health departments on plans for vaccination events. The details of the delivery of vaccinations will be finalized once it is clear how many students will be present on campuses this fall and what the local social distancing guidelines permit at each location.

**What other immunizations does the University policy require of students?**

The [UC Immunization Policy](#) requires incoming students to obtain the vaccinations and screening recommended for colleges and universities by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) for those diseases that can be passed on to others by respiratory transmission. These vaccines currently include: Measles, Mumps and Rubella; Varicella (chicken pox) (VZV) and tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Tdap). In addition, the meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MenACWY) is required for students aged 21 and younger. All incoming students must also complete an online screening questionnaire for tuberculosis (TB), based upon CDPH guidance.

**Will UC require students to get a COVID-19 vaccine when one is developed and available?**

We look forward to the development of an effective vaccine for SARS-CoV-2. We will update our immunization policy in consultation with the California Department of Public Health as new vaccines are approved by the FDA and recommendations for use are developed by the CDC.