

COVID-19 vaccination: UC's progress and policy

As we celebrate the promise of effective vaccines for COVID-19, the University of California is once again taking the lead in protecting the communities we serve. Across the state, University of California Health (UCH) is ramping up operations at vaccine clinics for their patients and eligible employees – with access increasing as quickly as supplies and state guidelines allow.

Related links

[Interim Policy: SARS-CoV-2 Vaccination Program](#)

[Information about COVID-19 vaccines from University of California Health](#)

Timeline for COVID-19 vaccination

California has updated their approach to vaccine distribution to ensure both speed and equity. The state's COVID-19 vaccine Phase 1a distribution plan focused on health care workers and long-term care residents and staff. At UCH, 85% of eligible health care workers have received a first dose and are in the process of receiving a second. As directed by the state, achieving this milestone enables UCH to begin outreach to those in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Phase 1b, which includes individuals ages 65 years and older.

Another important update is that the CDC has expanded its guidance on the window of time that an individual can wait for a second dose, while still generating the desired immunological response. This [new CDC guidance](#) should greatly alleviate concerns about appointment availability, especially in light of federal and state indications that more vaccine will be made available in the coming weeks.

UC has developed a systemwide plan to expand access at every campus according to evolving guidance from the CDC and the state – working toward access for all members of the UC community. As you are eligible and as vaccine is available, your campus will notify you with instructions on how to make your vaccine appointment.

In the meantime, you may also receive opportunities from county sites, your health provider or other sources. **Do not hesitate to take advantage of those opportunities should they become available sooner.** All of UC's health plans cover CDC-recommended vaccines administered by an employee's primary care physician or at a local pharmacy at no cost to you.

For updates about vaccine availability, register on your [health plan's website](#) and on [myturn.ca.gov](#) (currently available for online appointment booking in Los Angeles and San Diego counties only).

UC's COVID-19 vaccination policy

President Michael V. Drake, M.D., has approved an [interim COVID-19 vaccination policy](#) designed to protect the health and safety of the University community, including patients and faculty, staff, trainees, and others who work or train in any of the University's locations.

The policy requires all University of California personnel and certain trainees working or learning on-site to participate in SARS-CoV-2 vaccine education that will be available, and either consent to administration of the vaccine or affirmatively opt out of SARS CoV-2 vaccination. This policy supplements, and does not replace, existing policies requiring University personnel, trainees, patients, and visitors to observe non-pharmaceutical interventions including appropriate use of personal protective equipment (or, for patients and visitors, face coverings or facemasks), social and physical distancing, and frequent hand washing.

Details are available in the policy document and in a series of Frequently Asked Questions [below; link to separate page]. [Information about the safety and efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccine](#) is available from [University of California Health](#).

Please reach out to [CONTACT] if you have any questions about vaccine distribution or about UC's interim policy.

Frequently asked questions about UC's interim policy on COVID-19 vaccination

- 1. How will UC prioritize those receiving vaccine?*
Distribution will be staged at a state and local level consistent with federal and state guidelines.
- 2. How do I apply for a medical exemption or for a religious or disability accommodation?*
There is no need to apply for an exemption or accommodation. Those who are subject to this policy may either consent to the vaccination or opt out, by completing a declination form.
- 3. Who will pay for the vaccine?*
Initial supplies have been paid for by the federal government. Vaccines administered by the University as part of the program (e.g., during vaccine clinics or at employee health or occupational health offices) are administered free of charge. In addition, all of the University's health plans cover CDC-recommended vaccines administered by an employee's primary care physician or a local pharmacy.
- 4. How will I know if my co-workers are going unvaccinated?*
The University will not disclose vaccine status of individual employees to their coworkers; however, some locations may distribute badge attachments, stickers, pins, or other indicators that vaccinated individuals may use to show that they have received the vaccine.
- 5. Will locations provide paid time off for the time needed to get vaccinated?*

Yes.

6. *What if I experience flu-like symptoms as a result of the vaccine that mean I cannot work as scheduled?*

Please contact your supervisor or local human resources office for instruction.

7. *If I decline the vaccine, what “compensating safety measures” will apply to me?*

Currently all employees must comply with state and local health orders and with location-specific policies regarding non-pharmaceutical interventions including personal protective equipment or face coverings, social and physical distancing, frequent hand washing, and regular cleaning and disinfection. Additional safety measures may be deemed necessary by local public health, environmental health and safety, occupational health, or infection prevention authorities. In that case, an employee who has declined the vaccine will be informed of any additional requirements.

8. *How long will this interim policy remain in force?*

The policy will remain effective until it is superseded by a permanent policy or rescinded.

9. *Does this policy apply to contractors? Volunteers?*

Employees of contractors, independent contractors, and volunteers who work side-by-side with University personnel or trainees, or who have direct contact with patients, will be asked to participate in the program.

10. *How will enforcement work for failure to participate in the program?*

Efforts will be made to encourage participation by receiving education and *either* receiving vaccine or declining vaccine. Those who, following these efforts, fail to participate entirely, may be placed on unpaid leave or subject to discipline consistent with applicable policies, including the APM and PPSM, and applicable collective bargaining agreements.