

# FAQ: COVID-19 VACCINE & TESTING

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## GENERAL OVERVIEW

The California Department of Health has issued a new public health order requiring all healthcare personnel to obtain the COVID-19 vaccine by September 30, 2021.

In addition to the answers below, we strongly encourage you to consult with your healthcare providers about the risks and benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine.

**MEDICAL ADVICE DISCLAIMER:** These FAQs are for informational purposes only, and does not intend to substitute professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

## COVID-19 VACCINES

### Q: Which COVID-19 Vaccines are available?

**A:** Currently, two (2) COVID-19 vaccines have Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and one has full FDA approval. All three of these vaccines have been found to significantly lower the risk of COVID-19 infection and have also been shown to effectively lower the risk of severe disease, being hospitalized, or dying from COVID-19 if you are infected.

Vaccine Name	Age Authorized	Dosage
Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine	12-15 years of age or older under <b>EUA</b>	2 injections
Comirnaty (previously known as Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine)	16 years of age and older <b>FDA approved</b>	
Moderna Vaccine	18 years of age or older under <b>EUA</b>	2 injections
Johnson & Johnson Vaccine	18 years of age and older under <b>EUA</b>	1 injection

### Q: What is an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA)?

**A:** In an EUA, the FDA allows the use of a vaccine or drug during a time of emergency, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, when the available evidence shows the potential benefits outweigh the potential risks.

Drugs and vaccines that have been given an EUA continue to be studied in clinical trials. In the meantime, we recommend that those who get the vaccine still wear a mask and continue to practice social distancing and proper hand hygiene.

### Q: Why should I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

**A:** All COVID vaccines are effective at preventing and lowering the risk of severe COVID-19 disease. By getting vaccinated, you are reducing your risk of hospitalization, severe complications, or even death. Additionally, they are required for all healthcare workers, unless they fall under one or both of the exemptions (medical and religious).

### Q: What does it cost to get the vaccine?

**A:** COVID-19 vaccines are currently available at no cost to individuals.

**Q: Where can I be vaccinated?**

**A:** To find a vaccination location, please visit Epic Care's Vaccine Resources. Additional vaccination options can be found online at MyTurn.

**Q: What are the side effects of the vaccines?**

**A:** Some people have reported side effects after getting the vaccines, such as pain at the injection site, redness, and swelling in the arm where you received the shot. People may also experience tiredness, headache, muscle and joint pain, chills, nausea, and fever. These side effects typically improve after a few days. If you experience other symptoms, please contact your doctor for support.

**Q: I am experiencing symptoms post COVID vaccination, thus unable to work, do I have to use PTO in order to get paid?**

**A:** No. Epic Care through FFCRA will pay up to 80 hours of leave due to COVID-19.

**Q: Can the vaccines cause COVID-19?**

**A:** No. The mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) are not viruses and cannot cause disease. The other vaccine (Johnson & Johnson) uses a modified virus that cannot replicate and does not cause disease.

**Q: If I have an underlying condition, can I get a COVID-19 vaccine?**

**A:** People with underlying medical conditions can receive a COVID-19 vaccine as long as they have not had an immediate or severe allergic reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine or to any of the ingredients in the vaccine. Individuals with certain underlying medical conditions should strongly consider getting vaccinated for COVID-19 as they are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

**Q: Does the COVID-19 vaccine cause infertility?**

**A:** No. Getting the COVID-19 vaccine will not affect the fertility of women who are seeking to become pregnant. The COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for individuals who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant in the future, and breastfeeding. The COVID-19 vaccine encourages the body to create copies of the spike protein found on the coronavirus's surface. This teaches the body's immune system to fight the virus that has that specific spike protein on it. This spike protein is completely different from the spike protein syncytin-1 that is involved in the growth and attachment of the placenta during pregnancy.

**Q: If I am pregnant, can I get a COVID-19 vaccine?**

**A:** Yes, if you are pregnant, you can receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

**Q: Is pregnancy an approved exemption?**

**A:** For the purposes of this mandate, a person who is pregnant is not eligible for an exemption on that basis alone. However, a pregnant person may consult with their licensed healthcare provider in determining whether a medical reason exists which would then qualify for a medical exemption, as long as the required documentation is submitted to Human Resources before the September 30th deadline.

**Q: If I don't get a vaccine, am I at greater risk?**

**A:** Yes, you will be at a greater risk for contracting COVID-19 than someone who has received a vaccine. People who are immunocompromised may also be at risk for a more serious form of the illness. We strongly encourage everyone to get their vaccine as soon as they are eligible to do so.

**Q: Can I get vaccinated against COVID-19 while I am currently sick with COVID-19?**

**A:** No. People who with COVID-19 should wait to be vaccinated until they have recovered from their illness and no longer need to be isolated. People without symptoms should also wait until they meet criteria before getting vaccinated.

**Q: If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine?**

**A:** Yes, you should be vaccinated regardless of whether or not you have already had COVID-19. It is possible that you could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 again. Also, we currently do not know how long you are protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19.

**Q: Is it safe for my child to get a COVID-19 Vaccine?**

**A:** Yes. Studies show that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Like adults, children may have some side effects after vaccination. Children 12 years and older are now eligible to get the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine.

**Q: Why should my child get vaccinated against COVID-19?**

**A:** COVID-19 vaccination can help protect your child from getting COVID-19. Although fewer children have been sick with COVID-19 compared to adults, children can still be infected with COVID-19, can get sick from COVID-19, and can spread COVID-19 to others.

**Q: There have been some rare but serious side effects with the Johnson & Johnson Janssen COVID-19 vaccine. Is it safe?**

**A:** The CDC and FDA have recommended that the use of the Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) vaccine may resume in the United States. Women younger than 50 years old, however, should be aware of the rare risk of blood clots with low platelets after vaccination.

**Q: How long does protection from a COVID-19 vaccine last?**

**A:** We currently do not know how long protection lasts for those who are vaccine. This is currently being studied. The CDC will continue to keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available. Currently, third doses are recommended.

**Q: Where do I go for vaccine appointment information?**

**A:** For Contra Costa County visit their website at <https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/vaccine>. For Alameda County you may go to <https://covid-19.acgov.org/vaccines>

**Q: Where can I find out more information regarding the COVID-19 vaccines?**

**A:** The CDC and FDA have more information about COVID-19 vaccines, including the approval process, safety, the different types of vaccines, and the known possible risks and benefits of each one.

**Q: Who does the vaccine requirement apply to?**

**A:** To all Epic Care Epic Care Providers, Employees, Consultants, Independent Contractors, Externs, Locums, volunteers and other representatives not directly employed by Epic Care are required to comply with this health order.

Administrative staff (both on and off-site) will also be required to comply with this health order.

**Q: Can Epic Care mandate vaccination and testing, regardless of a Federal or State Order?**

**A:** Yes. Employers have the right to implement Policies that are supported by a mandate (or not). Furthermore, a company Policy can be more stringent - especially when they aim to maintain the health and safety of the workforce and by default, patients.

**Q: What if I can't be vaccinated because I have a valid medical contraindication or religious belief?**

**A:** Exemption requests should be made directly to Human Resources accompanied by a Declination Form and either a written statement signed by a Physician, Nurse Practitioner or other licensed medical professional practicing under the license of a Physician stating that you qualify for a medical exemption OR, a Declination

Form accompanied by a complete Religious Exemption Form, outlining how your sincerely held religious is against inoculation.

**Q: Where can I find a Declination and Religious Exemption Form?**

**A:** The Declination and Religious Exemption Forms can be found in the [COVID-19 folder](#) on the FileStore.

**Q: What about employees who are currently on an extended leave?**

**A:** Epic Care Providers, Employees, Consultants, Independent Contractors, Externs and Locums, who are currently on an extended leave, but will return after the September 30<sup>th</sup> deadline, will need to submit the required vaccination or exemption documentation to Human Resources for review and approval prior to his/her return.

**Q: Is interval testing an option instead of getting vaccinated?**

**A:** No. Our workforce is required to be vaccinated or have a valid, approved exemption under the new public health order and [policy](#). Testing alone will no longer be sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the mandate.

Weekly interval testing will only be required for those who have a valid and approved exemption.

**Q: Who do I submit my vaccine card or exemption paperwork to?**

**A:** All vaccination cards and exemption documentation must be submitted directly to [HR@epic-care.com](mailto:HR@epic-care.com).

**Q: What needs to happen by September 3<sup>rd</sup>?**

**A:** You must contact [HR@epic-care.com](mailto:HR@epic-care.com) to notify them of your plan to be in compliance (e.g. submitting a qualifying exemption or readiness to show proof of vaccination by 9/30/2021).

Those who are already vaccinated should submit documentation to Human Resources to validate their vaccination status (if you haven't already done so).

**Q: What needs to happen by September 30<sup>th</sup>?**

**A:** Epic Care must have in file a complete vaccination card or an approved, [qualifying exemption form](#) for all Epic Care Providers, Employees, Consultants, Independent Contractors, Externs and Locums who wish to remain employed by Epic Care.

**Q: What consequences will non-compliant Staff face?**

**A:** Those who are not fully vaccinated, or submit a qualifying exemption (religious or medical) under the order, will be terminated on October 1, 2021.

**Q: I am scheduled to receive a second dose on 10/1/2021, will I be terminated?**

**A:** Yes. Unfortunately, the State Mandate demands Employers to be in full compliance by 9/30/2021. This means having complete vaccination records or having received approval of an exemption.

## COVID-19 IN-HOUSE TESTING

**Q: What type of COVID-19 test is conducted at Epic Care sites?**

**A:** Viral Testing, a test that checks samples from the respiratory system (such as nasal or oral swabs, to determine whether an infection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, is present.

**Q: Do I, as an Epic Care Employee have to pay for the COVID-19 Test?**

**A:** No, if you are required to test, experiencing signs or symptoms of COVID-19, have been exposed to the virus, have been exposed to a site that meets the definition of an "outbreak", are conducting testing/obtaining samples; and/or have been advised to seek testing by the Safety Specialist, there is no cost to our staff members.

**Q: Will Epic Care pay for travel time for me to get vaccinated or tested?**

**A:** Time taken to get vaccinated or tested will be paid by Epic Care, including travel time and mileage, if applicable.

**Q: Which Epic Care Sites are conducting COVID-19 testing?**

**A:** Our Antioch, Castro Valley, Emeryville and Pleasant Hill locations have the resources necessary to provide COVID-19 testing to all Epic Care Providers and Staff that meet the criteria. Please note: testing can be performed anywhere testing is offered, including Epic Care.

**Q: Who collects the sample for COVID-19 test?**

**A:** A qualified Epic Care teammate will collect and process your sample.

**Q: What are the consequences for refusing mandatory testing?**

**A:** Epic Care Providers and Employees that refuse to comply with mandatory COVID-19 testing shall not be permitted to enter any Epic Care Sites, may be suspended without pay, and/or be subject to progressive discipline, including termination.

**Q: Does Epic Care report my test results to anyone outside of Epic Care?**

**A:** Yes, we are required by State and Federal Law to report COVID-19 results -regardless of whether the results are positive or negative.

**Q: How can I make an appointment to seek COVID-19 testing?**

**A:** Whether you are symptomatic or are required to be tested based on your vaccination status, you should contact your supervisor, who will make the arrangements necessary to schedule a testing appointment. You may also seek testing outside of Epic Care, through the County or your health care provider.

**Q: What is the turnaround time to obtain my results, if I get tested at Epic Care?**

**A:** Epic Care will notify you of your test results anytime shortly after sample collection.

More questions or comments? Please email the COVID-19 Task Force.

Thank you.