

# Flu Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions

## Baptist Health

### 1. Are flu shots required this year?

Yes, flu shots are required by **Monday, October 31** unless you have an approved exemption from Employee Health on or before this date. Baptist Health's vaccine policy is in place so we can **best protect ourselves, each other, and our patients**.

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### 2. If I don't want to get a flu vaccine, is there an exemption process as in the past?

Yes, the deadline to submit is **Saturday, October 1**. To submit an exemption, complete a form located on the Exchange ([Medical Exemption Form](#); [Religious Exemption Form](#); [Remote Work Certification Form](#)) and return it to [EmployeeHealth@bmcjax.com](mailto:EmployeeHealth@bmcjax.com).

If a medical or religious exemption request is denied, team members can either submit a reconsideration form within 7 days of receiving the denial notice or receive the vaccine.

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### 3. Where can I receive my flu vaccine?

Wherever is convenient for you!

- At a BH Employee Health Clinic: [Click here](#) to see dates and make an appointment.
  - Walgreens, CareSpot and Baptist Primary Care offices which are offering flu vaccines
    - Walgreens at Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center and the Pavilion at Baptist Jacksonville will be offering the flu vaccine.
  - Baptist physician offices, JOI and FSEDs participating in on-site vaccine administration for team members (only if you work at these sites). PLEASE NOTE: Leaders at participating offices/locations must request vaccine pick-up with Employee Health and arrange for on-site staff to give shots at these locations.
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#### 4. What is the deadline to get my flu shot or submit an exemption?

The deadline to receive the flu shot or have an approved exemption is **Monday, October 31**. Exemption requests must be submitted by **Saturday, October 1** to allow time for processing by the final deadline. Newly hired team members with a start date on or after October 1 will not be cleared to work without a flu shot or an approved exemption.

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#### 5. Why is the deadline in October instead of November?

We're getting ahead of flu season! According to the CDC: "September and October are generally good times to be vaccinated against flu. Ideally, everyone should be vaccinated by the end of October."

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#### 6. How do I submit my flu vaccine documentation?

If you receive a flu shot outside of an Employee Health vaccine clinic, please send vaccination documentation/confirmation to [employeehealth@bmcjax.com](mailto:employeehealth@bmcjax.com) or fax (904.391.5956) on or before Monday, October 31. Official documentation should include your **name, another identifier (i.e. birth date, home address, etc.) and date administered**. If you receive your flu shot at a hospital location through one of the vaccine clinics, no additional documentation is required.

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#### 7. Who is included in our annual flu shot requirement?

- All team members regardless of location
- Employed physicians
- Volunteers
- Residents and students
- On-site contractors and vendors who work indoors at Baptist Health facilities

NOTE: Volunteers at Baptist Health should follow the same process as team members for both vaccinations and exemptions. Compliance is monitored through Employee Health. However, for contactors, vendors, students, and residents, the employer or educational institution of these individuals is responsible for maintaining vaccination or exemption records and providing these records to Baptist Health upon request.

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## EXEMPTIONS

### 8. What are possible exemptions from the flu vaccine requirement?

Religious, medical and 100% remote work exemptions will be offered. Baptist Health will honor properly documented medical and religious exemptions, as required by law and in compliance with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Medical exemptions may be granted for certain medical conditions, including:

- History of severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) and a documented allergy test to indicate an immediate hypersensitivity reaction to the vaccine or component of the vaccine.
- Immediate allergic reaction of any severity after a previous dose or known (diagnosed) allergy to a component of the vaccine.
- History of previous life-threatening reaction to the vaccine.
- History of Guillain-Barré Syndrome.
- Other requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. A detailed description or supporting documentation and physician signature may be required.

Religious exemptions also will be granted for sincerely held religious beliefs that are contrary to the practice of immunization (including but not limited to the influenza vaccination, in particular). According to law and policy, religious beliefs can include strongly held moral or ethical beliefs. However, beliefs that are based on social, political, or economic philosophies, as well as personal preferences, are not considered religious beliefs under federal law and would not justify an exemption. Those who are exempted will be responsible for following all applicable masking and virus mitigation protocols per policy 1.6.2.

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### 9. Is there an exemption for 100% remote workers?

Yes. You may be eligible for a remote work certification exemption if you are a team member who:

- i. exclusively provides telemedicine services for Baptist Health or
- ii. provides support services for Baptist Health 100% remotely and *exclusively outside of any Baptist Health hospital, campus or facility.*

If you are a team member with a remote work certification exemption and will be on-site at a Baptist Health hospital or other Baptist Health campus or facility at any time, you are responsible for ensuring that, prior to coming onto a Baptist Health premises, you either

- (a) receive the annual flu shot or
- (b) obtain an approved medical or religious exemption, as described above.

If you believe that you are eligible for a remote work certification exemption, please complete the [Remote Work Certification Exemption Form](#) and submit it to [EmployeeHealth@bmcjax.com](mailto:EmployeeHealth@bmcjax.com). This form is also available on the Exchange. Employee Health will notify you if your request for a remote work certification exemption is approved.

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### **10. Why are we offering exemptions for remote team members?**

We encourage flu vaccines to protect ourselves, our fellow team members and our patients. While we still recommend 100% remote team members receive a vaccine to protect themselves and their loved ones, they may be exempt as they have no in-person interaction with patients or other Baptist Health team members.

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### **11. How do I submit an exemption request?**

Complete the forms located on the Exchange ([Medical Exemption Form](#); [Religious Exemption Form](#); [Remote Work Certification Form](#)) and return the forms to [EmployeeHealth@bmcjax.com](mailto:EmployeeHealth@bmcjax.com). Exemption forms are due on or before Saturday, October 1.

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### **12. How do I know if my exemption is approved or denied?**

Each request is being carefully and thoughtfully reviewed by Employee Health. You will receive an email notification advising you if your request has been approved or denied. Additional information, including documentation, may be requested during the initial review process and/or the reconsideration process, as necessary to evaluate the request for exemption.

If your request for a Medical Exemption or a Religious Exemption is denied, you may request a reconsideration of such denial **within seven days from the date of the denial notice**. As part of your request for a reconsideration, you may submit additional information to support the basis for your exemption. All requests for reconsideration will be blinded to protect the privacy of the team member.

To submit a request for reconsideration, please use one of the following documents, which are available on the Exchange.

- [Medical Exemption Request for Reconsideration Form](#)
- [Religious Exemption Request for Reconsideration Form](#)

If you have questions about eligibility for reconsideration for a Remote Work Certification Form, please email [employeehealth@bmcjax.com](mailto:employeehealth@bmcjax.com).

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**13. If I have an approved exemption from the past, do I need to resubmit my information?**

Yes. Please fill out a [Medical Exemption Form](#) or [Religious Exemption Form](#), even if you have filled out one in past years.

If you wish to rely solely on the existing information in your file from previous years, please state that on the new exemption form.

If you wish to submit additional/new information with your exemption request, please include it on the form and make reference to your previously granted exemption.

Please submit your exemption form to Employee Health on or before Saturday, October 1.

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**MEDICAL FAQs**

**14. What type of flu shots will be offered at Employee Health vaccine clinics?**

Employee Health will be offering the preservative-, latex-, and antibiotic-free FLULAVAL QUADRIVALENT vaccine.

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**15. Will Baptist Health be offering the high-dose vaccine at the Employee Health vaccine clinics?**

No, the Employee Health vaccine clinics will not be administering the high-dose quadrivalent vaccines. According to the CDC, the [high-dose quadrivalent vaccine](#) is approved for people 65 years and older. If you are 65 or older, consider receiving the high-dose vaccine at a retail pharmacy.

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**16. Should I get a flu shot if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?**

Yes. According to the CDC, “Flu vaccination is safe during pregnancy.” Influenza is more likely to cause severe illness in pregnant and postpartum women than in women who are not pregnant.

Pregnant women should get a flu shot, NOT the live virus vaccine (LAIV or nasal spray). Other shots, like the FLULAVAL QUADRIVALENT are safe and recommended for pregnant women as they contain an inactivated virus.

[Read more here](#) from the CDC. If you have questions about receiving the flu shot while pregnant or breastfeeding, Baptist Health's System Medical Director of Infectious Diseases Shalika Katugaha, MD, is available to speak with you at no charge. Please contact [Debra.Gadt@bmcjax.com](mailto:Debra.Gadt@bmcjax.com) to schedule.

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**17. Can I get a COVID-19 booster at the same time as I get my COVID-19 booster?**

Yes. According to the CDC, you can get a flu vaccine at the same time you get a COVID-19 vaccine, including a booster shot. If you would like to receive a flu vaccine and a COVID-19 booster, please schedule at a Walgreens or other retail pharmacy. The Baptist Health vaccine clinics will not be providing COVID-19 boosters.

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**OTHER**

**18. What happens if I do not get the flu vaccine or an approved exemption by the deadline?**

Without vaccination documentation or an approved exemption by October 31, 2022, you will receive a written letter of warning and will be removed from the schedule. If you do not achieve compliance, separation of employment will follow.

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**19. Will I have an indicator on my badge if I do not get a flu shot?**

No, there will not be an indicator on your badge at this time.

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**20. Is it legal for Baptist Health to inquire about or require proof of vaccine status from employees?**

Yes. Requesting confirmation of vaccination status is not a disability-related inquiry under the ADA and the ADA's rules about such inquiries do not apply. The employer is not asking a question that is likely to disclose the existence of a disability, as there are many reasons an employee may not show documentation or other confirmation of vaccination in the community besides having a disability. However, documentation and other confirmation of vaccination provided by team members to Baptist Health is personal information about an individual and will be kept confidential.

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**21. Where do contactors, vendors, students, residents and other “Support Associates” send documentation?**

Support associates are responsible for maintaining vaccination records or exemptions with their employer or institution and providing it to Baptist Health upon request.

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**22. Where do volunteers send documentation?**

Volunteers at Baptist Health should follow the same process as team members for both vaccinations and exemptions. Compliance is monitored through Employee Health.