

FAQs about Influenza Vaccination Requirement for MSU Healthcare Workers:

1. Why is influenza vaccine required for MSU healthcare workers?

About 50,000 deaths in this country occur from influenza each year, many of which could be prevented by immunization of healthcare workers. In December 2012, there have already been two deaths of children in Michigan from influenza. The immunization policy is to protect the patients we serve, as well as healthcare workers. This decision is based on the CDC/MDCH and multiple other professional medical society recommendations. (American Academy of Family Physicians, Institute of Medicine, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology Infectious Disease Society of America.) CDC recommendations for healthcare workers are the guidelines for all required vaccines for MSU healthcare workers.
2. What if I choose not to be vaccinated?

If you have a documented medical contraindication to the vaccine or choose not to be vaccinated, you will be required to wear an MSU-supplied mask when working in patient care areas.
3. What is considered a patient care area?

In outpatient clinics, it includes all areas where healthcare workers are within 3 feet of patients: exam rooms, clinic or hospital hallways, waiting rooms, reception areas, some offices where patients are seen by a healthcare worker. In hospital settings, it is the entire hospital area where patients are located, or are going from one place to another.
4. What if I am not sure if I qualify as a healthcare worker?

You can call Occupational Health at 353-9137 and one of our staff members will be able to explain the specific criteria used to determine the job duties that require an employee to be considered a healthcare worker at MSU.
5. Where do I get the masks?

Your clinic will provide these. Ask your clinic manager or nurse manager where they are located.
6. How often do I need to change my mask?

You should change your mask after your lunch and after breaks if you leave the clinical area during these times as well as after using the restroom.
7. How long is influenza season?

This varies by year and by location within the country. The CDC defines it as November 1 through May 1. In Michigan, we generally do not see much influenza until about December 1. If the season begins or ends outside of the

CDC time frame, a notification will be sent to those who are wearing masks to inform them that they need to wear them earlier, or that they can discontinue wearing them.

8. How should I dispose of masks?

Used masks should be placed in regular trash containers.

9. What is the best way of preventing influenza in the healthcare setting?

The most important factor in preventing influenza is annual vaccination of healthcare workers who have contact with patients and careful, regular hand washing.

10. What do I say if a patient asks me why I am wearing a mask?

A good answer would be, "I'm wearing a mask to protect myself and prevent the spread of influenza to patients because I have not been vaccinated."

11. How will supervisors know who needs to wear a mask?

Supervisors will be given a list of employees in their unit who need to wear masks during flu season.

12. What if someone in my unit has not been vaccinated and is not wearing a mask?

You may discuss the issue with your co-worker or report this instance to your supervisor.

13. Do other healthcare facilities require influenza vaccination?

Yes, and the number is growing. In Michigan, U of M, St. Joseph Mercy in Ann Arbor, the Detroit Medical Center, Karmanos Cancer Center, Spectrum Health, Allegiance Healthcare, Beaumont, Bronson, and Henry Ford Healthcare System all require influenza vaccination.

14. What if I got my influenza vaccine at a health care facility other than MSU Occupational Health?

You need to call that facility and ask that they give you documentation of your immunization. The documentation can be faxed to Occupational Health at 355-0332, emailed as an attachment to occhealth@ht.msu.edu or sent via campus mail to Occupational Health, Room 346 Olin Health Center.

15. What if I work in a facility that has different requirements than MSU?

If you are an MSU employee, you must comply with the MSU requirement. If, as an MSU employee, you work in other healthcare facilities that require vaccination and don't accept masking, then you need to comply with the vaccine requirement, unless you have clearly documented medical contraindications.

16. What if I have other questions?
Call MSU Occupational Health at 353-9137.