

## Required Influenza Vaccination Questions and Answers

**The Seasonal Influenza Vaccination is required of all employees, volunteers, students and applicable non-employees. Vaccinations are free to all who provide service to the organization.**

### **1. Why is Children's Hospital Central California requiring influenza vaccinations?**

Children's Hospital Central California wants to provide the safest environment possible for patients and their families, employees, and visitors to our facilities. Requiring vaccinations will help protect patients, employees and others from the seasonal flu. The medical staff at Children's Hospital is also in support of requiring the flu vaccine and is in the final stages of adjusting its rules and regulations.

### **2. When will this new policy go into effect?**

The policy change goes into effect immediately. For the 2013/2014 season, all vaccinations are required by January 1, 2014. For next season, 2014/2015, and every year thereafter, vaccinations will be required by November 1. This season's exemption request for medical and religious reasons must be received by December 9, 2013, allowing notification to the employee by December 20, 2013. **\*\*Please note:** employees working at the Saint Agnes satellite location in any capacity must complete their immunization or exemption requests by October 15, 2013 for this season.

### **3. Is it possible to have an exemption from the vaccination?**

Yes. An individual may request a medical or religious exemption. A Request for Medical or Religious Exemption form and supporting documentation must be submitted to Employee Health by December 9, 2013 (or October 15 for Saint Agnes satellite personnel) in accordance with the information in item two above. The form is located on the George Page. Request for medical exemption requires documentation from a physician stating the medical condition prohibiting the vaccination. Request for religious exemption requires documentation from a religious leader associated with a recognized religion with published doctrine of belief. The deadline for exemption requests for future influenza seasons is anticipated to be October 15 each year.

### **4. If an individual receives a medical or religious exemption does she/he have to follow any special precautions when working in patient care areas?**

Yes. Those who receive medical or religious exemption are required to wear droplet precaution masks at all times in any geographic location where there might be contact with Children's patients, families or other Children's personnel. (See policy HR-1019 for further delineation).

### **5. Will a new medical or religious exemption need to be submitted each year?**

Yes. A new Exemption Request form is required each year.

### **6. I never come in contact with patients. Why do I have to get a flu shot?**

Even people who don't have direct contact with patients do have contact with caregivers. Thus, you can inadvertently start a chain of infection and spread the flu to caregivers, patients and others.

**7. I've never had the flu. I've never had the shot. Why do I have to receive the vaccination?**

Infection Control physicians, American Pediatric Association, American Academy of Family Physicians and many other medical experts and professional organizations strongly advocate for annual flu vaccination to promote safety for our patients and colleagues. There are documented cases of patient mortality due to nosocomial (acquired in the hospital) flu infections, even at Children's Hospital.

**8. Is it a HIPAA violation/confidentiality breach to disclose vaccination/exemption information to department management?**

Vaccination or exemption information may be shared on a need-to-know basis. HIPAA permits sharing this information as part of healthcare operations, which generally include those activities we perform to improve the quality of care delivered to patients.

**9. Why should I get the vaccination in September when it is first offered?**

The typical flu season starts in October, reaches its peak in January or February and runs as late as May, according to the CDC. It generally takes 2-3 weeks to increase your immunity to the highest level after receiving the vaccine. Therefore, vaccination as soon as possible will help the organization's workforce achieve maximum immunity before the peak flu season arrives.

**10. Can the vaccine cause influenza?**

No. Neither the injectable (inactivated) vaccine nor the live attenuated (nasal spray) vaccine can cause influenza. The injectable influenza vaccine contains only killed viruses and cannot cause influenza disease. Fewer than 1 percent of people who are vaccinated develop influenza-like symptoms, such as mild fever and muscle aches, after vaccination. These side effects are not the same as having the actual disease. The nasal spray influenza vaccine contains live attenuated (weakened) viruses that can produce mild symptoms similar to a cold. While the viruses are able to replicate in the nose and throat tissue and produce protective immunity, they are attenuated and do not replicate effectively in the lung. Consequently, they cannot produce influenza disease.

**11. If someone feels ill, should they get the flu vaccination?**

People who are moderately or severely ill should usually wait until they recover before getting the flu vaccine. If you are ill, talk to your doctor about whether to reschedule the vaccination. People with a mild illness can usually get the vaccine.

**12. Can I get vaccinated from another source besides Children's Hospital Central California?**

Yes. However, you must provide documentation of the date and alternate location where you were vaccinated. Proof of vaccination must be given to Employee Health by December 20, 2013 for this current flu season.

Remember, the flu shot is free here at Children's Hospital.

**13. Can family members receive a vaccination from Children's Hospital Central California?**

Not at this time. It's highly recommended that healthcare providers' family members get vaccinated.

**14. What if someone dislikes needles? Will Children's Hospital Central California offer employees the option of using the nasal spray instead of the flu shot?**

The CDC says that the nasal-spray flu vaccine is fine for healthy people ages 2 through 49 who are not pregnant. However, the agency recommends healthcare workers caring for people with severely weakened immune systems who require a protected hospital environment should get the flu shot rather than the nasal spray. Limited supplies of the nasal spray, or mist, will be available through Children's Hospital.

**15. I am allergic to eggs, can I get the flu vaccine?**

Children's Hospital Central California is offering a vaccine called Flucelvax. **Vaccine viruses for Flucelvax are not propagated in eggs, however, initial reference strains have been passaged in eggs.**

**The vaccine cannot be considered egg-free, though it is expected to contain less egg protein than other IIV Inactivated Influenza vaccine making it an alternative for anyone who does not have a severe allergy to eggs.** Please see the Medical Exemption Request form for additional information and speak with your physician to see if this is a good alternative vaccine for you.

**16. What if an employee has an adverse reaction after the flu shot?**

The employee should report his/her concerns to Employee Health.

**17. How safe is this vaccine?**

The influenza vaccine is very safe and has been given since 1943. The most common side effects include soreness, redness or swelling at the site of the injection. These reactions are temporary and occur in 15 percent to 20 percent of recipients. Less than 1 percent of recipients of either form of vaccine develop symptoms such as fever, chills and muscle aches for one to two days following the vaccination. These symptoms are more likely to occur in a person who has never been exposed to the influenza virus or vaccine. Experiencing these nonspecific side effects does not mean that you are getting influenza. Serious adverse reactions to either vaccine are very rare.

**18. I am pregnant. Am I exempt from receiving the flu vaccine?**

No. According to the CDC, you can receive the flu shot any time, during any trimester while you are pregnant. Pregnant women should receive the flu shot because they are more likely to have serious complications if they get the flu. If you're pregnant, once you get the flu shot, your body will start producing antibodies that will help protect you against the flu, and this protection can be passed to your unborn baby.

Please note that pregnant women should receive the injectable vaccine and not the nasal spray.

**19. Who should employees contact if they have any questions?**

Employees should contact their manager/supervisor, Employee Health or Human Resources.

**Composition of the 2013–14 Influenza Vaccine** The Food and Drug Administration's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee has recommended that the 2013–14 influenza trivalent vaccines used in the United States contain an A/California/7/2009(H1N1)pdm09-like virus, an A(H3N2) virus antigenically like the cell-propagated A/Victoria/361/2011 virus (A/Texas/50/2012), and a B/Massachusetts/2/2012-like (B/Yamagata lineage) virus. A/Texas/50/2012 is an egg-propagated A(H3N2) virus antigenically similar to cell-propagated A/Victoria/361/2011. The committee recommended that A/Texas/50/2012 be used as the H3N2 vaccine component because of antigenic changes in A/Victoria/361/2011 vaccine virus resulting from mutations acquired during growth in eggs. The committee also recommended that quadrivalent vaccines contain a B/Brisbane/60/2008-like (B/Victoria lineage) virus (I). These recommendations were based on global influenza virus surveillance data related to epidemiology, antigenic and genetic characteristics, and serological responses to 2012–13 seasonal vaccines, and the availability of candidate strains and reagents.