

New flu vaccination policies at UF Health / Message from Dr. David Guzick

Wed 8/20/14 email

Dear Colleagues:

To safeguard the health of our patients and their loved ones, visitors, staff and the community, we are introducing new flu vaccination policies for the 2014-15 influenza season.

For certain faculty and staff and those working in areas of the UF Health in which patient care is provided, we will require mandatory flu vaccination. Those who decide not to receive the vaccination must follow a formal opt-out process by Nov. 15, after which they will be required to wear face masks while in clinical care areas.

This policy applies to all UF Health Shands staff, volunteers, and credentialed and allied health providers; and UF college faculty, staff and students who provide care or work in patient care areas at UF Health Shands, UF Health Physicians and the UF College of Dentistry.

We will make it easy for you to obtain your vaccination here at UF Health. There will be multiple vaccination events at our UF Health campuses and locations throughout Gainesville. The UF Student Health Care Center will provide free, convenient onsite vaccination for our UF faculty and staff. UF Health Shands Occupational Health has a robust vaccination program to provide free flu vaccination for UF Health Shands employees, volunteers and providers, and the team will visit multiple locations and partner with the UF SHCC throughout the fall.

UF Health Shands will enforce a new HR Policy 604 (Occupational Health Policy) and revised HR Policy 301 (Work Rules Policy). For UF-employed providers and other credentialed medical staff as well as allied health providers providing care at UF Health Shands and UF Health Physicians, please refer to UF Health Shands Medical Staff Policy-Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Program. The UF College of Dentistry is also implementing mandatory flu vaccine or opt-out plans for all faculty, staff, residents and students who have direct patient contact in UF-owned dental centers.

For staff and providers at UF Health Shands and UF Health Physicians facilities, vaccinated staff will be given special stickers to display on ID badges to show compliance; those without in the above-mentioned areas will be required to wear masks from Nov. 15 through March 31. Failure to comply with mandatory vaccination and use of masks in the appropriate areas will result in a progressive disciplinary process.

You will receive more information throughout the flu season. Starting Sept. 8, you can visit the Flu Central intranet site at bridge.UFHealth.org/flu for details, vaccination event schedules and other resources.

Why are we mandating flu vaccination? It's our responsibility to lead the way in protecting the UF Health community and the community at large. Flu is the sixth-leading cause of death in the U.S., and last season, 387 patients with lab-confirmed flu were admitted and 15 patients died from flu complications at UF Health Shands Hospital. Our community faced a particularly aggressive strain of H1N1 virus that impacted younger people in addition to vulnerable patient populations, hospital staff and the elderly.

Infected health care workers can cause flu outbreaks in hospitals and clinics, and that is why we have made every attempt to enforce work rules that require staff to stay home when ill. Last year, we documented a significant number of hospital workers who were exposed to influenza and subsequently missed work, resulting in about \$1 million in costs to UF Health Shands to provide additional staffing and resources.

Hospitals and health systems around the nation are mandating flu vaccination among doctors, nurses, providers and support staff. It is the right thing to do — for us and for our patients — and I appreciate your support as we roll out this new process.

Forward Together,

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