Vaccine Requirement & Enhanced Safety Protocols FAQ

Why are we requiring vaccination against COVID-19?

Our top priority is protecting the health and safety of our staff, our patients and our communities – especially given the rapid spread of the highly contagious Delta variant among unvaccinated people. Extensive research has made it clear that vaccination is the most effective way to prevent severe illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

Why is St. Lawrence Health requiring vaccination before FDA approval?

The Delta variant is the most contagious version of COVID-19 and spreads about 225% faster than the original version of the virus. We want all St. Lawrence Health staff to stay healthy, and the vaccine is a safe and effective way to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

When will the vaccine be fully approved by the FDA?

Approval is expected in early 2022, if not sooner.

What happens if I don't want to get vaccinated against COVID-19?

Staff who cannot receive the vaccine due to federal and/or state guidelines will be able to seek an exemption to this requirement. Those who choose not to be vaccinated for other reasons must update Human Resources (instructions/Workday option shall be forthcoming) acknowledging their decision. Staff who request an exemption or choose to opt out must complete and submit the appropriate form(s) by no later than Wednesday, September 8.

Those who do not get vaccinated will need to comply with additional safety protocols on an ongoing basis, including:

- Mandatory COVID-19 testing each week.
- Completion of learning modules that provide education about the importance and efficacy of the vaccine.
- PPE use appropriate to your work location and in accordance with the latest guidance.
- Social distancing as recommended by latest guidelines.

Is it legal to require staff to get vaccinated against COVID-19?

Yes. The federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has determined that requiring the COVID-19 vaccine for staff aligns with federal disability law and civil rights statutes.

Is the vaccine safe?

Yes. The COVID-19 vaccine continues to be the safest, most effective way to prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 and to minimize the illness if it is contracted.

Through the extensive Emergency Use Authorization process, the U.S. Food & Drug Administration has determined that the Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and Janssen vaccines are safe and effective. More than 164 million Americans and 11.1 million New Yorkers have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to date. Extensive research has shown the vaccines are remarkably effective at preventing COVID-19 infection, hospitalization and death. More details are available at cdc.gov/coronavirus.

What other health systems have mandated the vaccine for healthcare workers?
The American Hospital Association has strongly urged health systems to mandate the vaccination of healthcare workers. Currently, we are aware of several health systems requiring vaccination, including: Rochester Regional Health, New York-Presbyterian, Yale New Haven, Trinity Health and hospitals run by the State of New York and New York City.

What is our current rate of vaccination among St. Lawrence Health staff?
Currently, 75% of our staff, including contracted members of our workforce, have been vaccinated against COVID-19.

If I received the vaccine at St. Lawrence Health, will that information automatically be shared through the appropriate channels?
Yes, if vaccinated through Occupational Health your status will automatically update.

How do I prove my vaccination status if I received it somewhere other than St. Lawrence Health?
If you received your vaccination at an outside facility, please ensure your vaccine status is update to date with Occupational Health and email proof of vaccination to Occupational Health. If you have received your "CRUSH COVID-19" badge sticker, your vaccinated status has been recorded.

Who does the COVID-19 vaccination requirement apply to at St. Lawrence Health?
The requirement will apply to all staff, including all staff and providers who practice at St. Lawrence Health facilities and those working remotely. Furthermore, the requirement will also apply to all volunteers, students, and contracted employees working onsite.

How can I get vaccinated against COVID-19?
It's easy to get vaccinated when you're ready. You can receive your vaccination through Occupational Health or by scheduling an appointment at a location near you.

Do staff have the option to choose the vaccine they want?
St. Lawrence Health staff may receive any of the three vaccines currently available under Emergency Use Authorization in the United States. Once the first of the three receives full approval from the FDA, that vaccine will be made available to staff who have not yet been fully vaccinated. St. Lawrence Health may be limited to administering whichever vaccine our pharmacies have in stock.

What does the vaccine cost? What if I don't have insurance?
The vaccine is free to everyone, regardless of where you receive it or your insurance status.