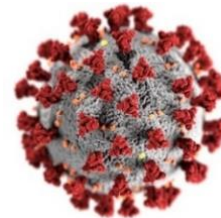




COVID-19 FAQ

Variants and Vaccines



UPDATED 8-5-2021

This FAQ will be updated as more information on the vaccination/testing/masking mandate becomes available. Please check back frequently.

As COVID-19 restrictions and guidance change constantly, it is important for PEF members to continue using good COVID controls, especially as new variants spread rapidly through the U.S. Controlling the spread of COVID-19 requires a layered approach including: vaccination, ventilation, masking (respirators for member providing direct care to confirmed or suspected COVID-19 patients), low density in workplaces, social distancing, cleaning and disinfection, and barriers when in contact with a high volume of customers.

Getting vaccinated is still the best way to protect yourself and reduce the spread of COVID-19 and its variants.

You may have already gotten vaccinated, or you or someone you know may still may have questions. Below you will find some questions and answers on the new NYS mandates, the Delta variant, vaccines, how to best protect yourself, and where to find credible resources with the most up-to-date information.

WHAT IS PEF'S POSITION REGARDING NEW YORK STATE EMPLOYEES VACCINATION AND TESTING MANDATES?

On July 28, 2021, Governor Cuomo announced that and that all State employees—about 130,000 people—will be required to get vaccinated for COVID-19 by Labor Day. State employees who do not get vaccinated will be required to be tested for COVID-19 on a weekly basis. Additionally, all patient facing healthcare workers must get vaccinated by Labor Day. There is no testing option for healthcare workers.

PEF strongly encourages members to get vaccinated. The vaccines are proven to prevent the deadly COVID-19 virus and create a safer workplace. In a 7/28/21 statement, President Spence said “We agree with other unions that a vaccination mandate must be bargained between labor and management. In addition, PEF recognizes that both public and private employers have the right to require COVID testing, but any testing of state employees must not put the health of our members at risk. PEF will continue to advocate for increased telecommuting where possible and strict COVID protocols in the workplace, including masks as required, proper air ventilation in all state offices, and social distancing as appropriate.”

Please see the PEF factsheet “Understanding the NYS Vaccine/Testing Mandate and CDC Revised Mask Guidelines” for more information.

WHAT IS A VIRUS VARIANT?

Viruses constantly change through mutation. A variant has one more mutations that makes it different from other variants. Some variants spread more easily and are resistant to treatments and/or vaccines. Not only does getting the vaccine protect you, it helps prevent viruses from mutating. Every time the virus infects someone who is not vaccinated, it is an opportunity for the virus to mutate and become more transmissible, lethal, or resistant to treatments and vaccines.

WHAT IS THE DELTA VARIANT?

The Delta variant was first identified in India in December of 2020 and is now found around the world and in all 50 states in the U.S. The Delta variant is currently the most common variant in the U.S. comprising the

vast majority of all new cases in July 2021. Compared to the Alpha variant (the previous dominant variant in the U.S), Delta is 50% more contagious, has a shorter incubation period, and while it may not be more lethal it increases the number of those infected, which leads to an increase in the number of fatalities. Unvaccinated people are more likely to be hospitalized with this variant as those infected with the Alpha variant. Unvaccinated persons currently make up over 98% of those hospitalized or dying from COVID illness in the U.S.

IF I AM UNVACCINATED, HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF?

If you are not vaccinated or are vaccinated and have a weakened immune system, follow the recommendations below for vaccinated individuals and also practice the following:

- Always wear a mask in indoor public spaces and in crowded outdoor events.
- Put six feet of distance between yourself and people who do not live in your household.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

It is important to remember that an infected individual may present no symptoms but can still spread the virus to those who are unvaccinated and vaccinated. This is why it is important to follow the recommendations, even if not presenting COVID-19 symptoms.

If you are not vaccinated, you should speak to your doctor about the vaccines and if they are right for you. Vaccination is still the best way to protect yourself from the virus. The vaccines are safe and effective. Get your information on the vaccine from reliable scientific sources.

IF I AM VACCINATED, SHOULD I BE WORRIED ABOUT COVID-19, INCLUDING THE DELTA VARIANT?

Getting vaccinated is still the best way to prevent being infected with COVID-19, including the Delta variant. Although those who are vaccinated can be infected, it is not as common, and in most cases the full vaccination (2 weeks after required final dose) will prevent serious illness, hospitalization and death. Those vaccinated should keep in mind that they can still spread the virus, which may play a more significant role with the Delta variant; this will especially impact those that are not vaccinated and those at high risk.

IF VACCINATED PEOPLE CAN STILL GET INFECTED AND SPREAD THE DISEASE, WHY GET VACCINATED?

No vaccine is 100% effective and breakthrough cases occur for all vaccine preventable diseases. However, the COVID-19 vaccines reduce the risk of serious illness, hospitalization and death for those who experience breakthrough infections. Recent data indicates that 98% of hospitalization and 99% of COVID-19 deaths occurred in those who were unvaccinated or were not fully vaccinated.

IF I AM VACCINATED, WILL I NEED A BOOSTER SHOT TO PROTECT MYSELF AGAINST THE DELTA AND OTHER COVID-19 VARIANTS?

It is too soon to know whether boosters will be needed. As of now, the FDA, CDC and NIH, have stated that those who have been fully vaccinated do not need a booster shot at this time. These agencies, along with vaccine developers, are continually evaluating whether or when a booster might be necessary. Currently Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson are working to develop booster shots.

IF I RECEIVE THE COVID-19 VACCINATION, CAN I IGNORE ALL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS THAT PROTECT ME FROM BEING INFECTED WITH COVID-19?

No! Although receiving the vaccination is the best form of preventing COVID-19, you can still be infected with and spread COVID-19. You should still take the following precautions:

- Wash your hands often or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer, if soap and water are not available.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes. Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after a cough or sneeze.
- Monitor your health daily. Watch for symptoms of COVID-19.
- Wear a facial covering at crowded indoor settings, where vaccination statuses are unknown, especially when staying for an extended period of time.
- Stay home if you are sick.

Also, you must always follow the requirements of your workplace.

HOW DOES THE REVISED CDC MASK GUIDANCE AFFECT ME?

On July 23, 2021, CDC announced updated mask recommendations for vaccinated individuals. Due to the highly transmissible nature of the Delta Variant, CDC recommends that those vaccinated and living or working in an area identified with “substantial or high transmission” rates should wear a mask indoors. This means that everyone in those areas should wear a mask indoors. As of August 5, 2021, more than half of New York counties were at Substantial levels of community infection, and the number increases every day. This information is updated daily and can be found on CDC’s website at [COVID-19 Integrated County View](#) and at the New York Times [NYT Interactive COVID Map](#)

IS THE VACCINE SAFE?

As of July 19, 2021, over 338 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been given in the United States. It has been proven that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective and determined that the any risks of the COVID-19 vaccine outweigh the potential risks of becoming infected with COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccines have undergone the most intense safety monitoring in U.S. history.

- Current safety data has indicated that it is safe for pregnant women to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The CDC does still recommend consulting with your doctor to help you decide whether to get the vaccine.
- There is currently no evidence that the COVID-19 vaccination can cause problems getting pregnant or cause fertility issues in men or women.
- Vaccine studies have shown that most side effects following a vaccine happen within six weeks, and long-term side effects are extremely unlikely.
- Two rare, but serious, types of health problems have been found after receiving the COVID-19 vaccination, anaphylaxis and thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) after vaccination with the Johnson & Johnson Janssen vaccine. Anaphylaxis can occur after any vaccination and if it does occur, vaccination providers have medicines readily available to treat the reaction; this is why you will be asked to stay 15-30 minutes after your vaccination so you can be observed.

WHERE CAN I GET VACCINATED?

Refer to the NYS Health Department's COVID-19 Website, [COVID-19 Vaccine | COVID-19 Vaccine \(ny.gov\)](#)

COVID-19 information and guidance frequently change. More information on the safety of the COVID-19 vaccine and misinformation below in the resources, including a website to determine if a source is credible.

The information in this fact sheet is to provide PEF members with accurate data on the COVID-19 vaccines. The decision to get vaccinated is a personal choice. PEF encourages members to discuss any concerns regarding vaccination with a healthcare provider.

RESOURCES

1. 5 Things to Know about the Delta Variant – <https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/5-things-to-know-delta-variant-covid>
 2. About Variants of the Virus that Causes COVID-19 – https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/variant.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Ftransmission%2Fvariant.html
 3. COVID-19 Vaccine (NYS Department of Health) - <https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/>
 4. COVID Data Tracker – <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#variant-proportions>
 5. Guidance for Unvaccinated People – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>
 6. Joint CDC and FDA Statement on Vaccine Boosters – <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/joint-cdc-and-fda-statement-vaccine-boosters>
 7. Myths & Facts – https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/facts.html?s_cid=11351:covid%20vaccine%20and%20fertility:sem.ga:p:RG:GM:gen:PTN:FY21
 8. New Information for Parents on Myocarditis and COVID-19 Vaccines – <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/new-information-for-parents-on-myocarditis-and-covid-19-vaccines-202107012523#:~:text=Currently%2C%20about%201%2C000%20cases%20of,%2C%20Pfizer%2FBioNTech%20or%20Moderna.>
 9. Pregnancy or Breastfeeding – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html>
 10. Safety of COVID-19 Vaccines – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/safety-of-vaccines.html>
 11. SARS-CoV-2 Variant Classifications and Definitions – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/variant-info.html>
 12. When You've Been Fully Vaccinated – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>
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This factsheet and many others were developed and produced by the NYS Public Employees Federation Health and Safety Department. If you have any questions or need assistance with workplace health and safety issue, please contact the PEF Health & Safety Department at 1-800-342-4306, ext. 254 or at HealthandSafety@pef.org.

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