

Frequently Asked Questions regarding CAMH's COVID-19 Vaccine Policy

Q: What does CAMH's new vaccine policy mean for me?

A: As of October 19, 2021, CAMH is implementing a policy requiring vaccination against COVID-19 for all employees, physicians, contactors, volunteers, and learners/students. Mandatory COVID-19 vaccination is supported by CAMH's Board of Trustees and is in line with other city, provincial, federal bodies and peer hospitals.

Q: When does this policy come into effect?

A: The policy will be rolled out in stages. The first stage requires that as of September 7, 2021, all staff submit their record of immunization via [RedCAP](#) to Health, Safety & Wellness (HSW). Also effective September 7, 2021, any new hires and volunteers are required to be fully vaccinated.

Beginning September 7, 2021, staff who are partially vaccinated or have not yet been vaccinated will be required to:

- Complete an e-learning on the COVID-19 vaccines;
- Undertake COVID-19 testing 3 times a week, whether they are working on site or off site, and whether they are part-time or full-time;
- Show proof of a negative test at screening when coming on site.

As of October 19, 2021, all staff, physicians, students, volunteers, and contractors will be required to receive full COVID-19 vaccination (2 doses, including 14 days since second dose). Staff who refuse to be vaccinated will be placed on an unpaid leave of absence. Students, volunteers and contractors who are not fully vaccinated by October 19, 2021 will not be permitted on site.

Q: Why is CAMH introducing this mandatory vaccine policy?

A: COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Mandating vaccines for our staff, physicians, students, volunteers and contractors will improve the safety and well-being of our patients, our colleagues, members of the CAMH community, as well as the public. We want to do everything possible to reduce the possibility of COVID-19 entering the hospital and infecting patients, staff and others and reduce the burden on the overall healthcare system.

Unvaccinated health care workers pose risks to patients and other health care workers as well as to health care system capacity due to the potential of introducing COVID-19 into hospital settings. In addition to those concerns, the prevalence of the Delta variant globally and within Ontario is of great concern as the Delta variant is more transmissible and the resulting disease more severe as compared to prior COVID-19 strains. This heightens the immediate risk to patients within hospitals who are more vulnerable and medically complex than the general population, and therefore more susceptible to infection and severe outcomes from COVID-19.

Q: Who does this policy apply to?

A: This policy applies to all CAMH employees, physicians, students/learners, volunteers, contractors, including people on contract and/or employed by an employment agency or third party.

Q: What will happen to me if I decline to get vaccinated?

A: COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. More information about the COVID-19 vaccines can be found [here](#) and we encourage you to speak with your doctor if you have additional questions.

If you are still unvaccinated by October 19, 2021, you will be placed on an unpaid leave of absence. As with other leaves of absences, staff will have the option to choose to pay in to pension and benefits and will be provided all information to make an informed choice. For those who decide to get vaccinated after that date, you will be permitted to return to work once you have submitted proof of vaccination to Health Safety and Wellness (HSW). Once back at work, you will be required to be tested three times a week until you are fully vaccinated. You will also be required to complete your vaccination with a second dose within the recommended interval (21 days for Pfizer, 28 days for Moderna) and provide proof as per our policy.

Q: Does this apply to physicians?

A: Yes, the policy applies to physicians.

Q: Does this apply to learners?

A: Yes, this policy applies to all CAMH students and learners. As learners often move between hospitals, their educational institutions will be collecting vaccination status, and those with 1 vaccine dose, or not vaccinated will be required to comply with testing.

As of October 19, those who are not vaccinated will no longer be able to be a student learner at CAMH.

Q: What vaccine do I have to get?

A: Vaccines [approved by Health Canada](#) are required. If you have not received a Health Canada approved vaccine please contact your Public Health Unit for further guidance.

Q: I believe I cannot take the vaccine due to my medical condition. How do I get an exemption from the policy?

A: COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Vaccines are being recommended for all groups. Health Canada has [provided helpful guidance](#) about the safety of vaccines to special populations.

If you would like to still explore a medical exemption, please contact Health Safety and Wellness (HSW) for next steps.

HSW will review medical information submitted to ensure it is in compliance with the standards for medical exemptions from vaccinations. This information must be submitted to HSW by September 21, 2021 to be compliant with the policy.

Regular testing is required to be done and reported during the period of review.

Q: I think I cannot be vaccinated due to my religious belief. What do I do?

A: We have conducted thorough research and at this time are not aware of any religion that prevents receiving a vaccination against COVID-19. However, if you believe that you may have a religious exemption, please talk to your HR Consultant regarding next steps.

Q: People can get still get COVID even with the vaccine so why does mandatory vaccination help?

A: With the 4th Wave upon us, every new infection risks a new and even more virulent variant, including the Delta variant which is a growing concern within Ontario due to its increased transmissibility and severity compared to previous COVID-19 virus strains. The science is telling us that this variant has an effective reproduction rate between 5 and 9, whereas the original virus had a rate of 2 to 3. The rapid development of this variant poses a risk to patients, especially those who are more vulnerable to infection and severe outcomes from COVID-19. Although we know that this disease can sometimes break through in fully vaccinated people, the vaccine has proved effective to a great extent in preventing serious illness, hospitalization, and death. Further, the potential for breakthrough infections in fully vaccinated people is rare. This mandatory vaccination policy is the best way to keep our staff, patients and CAMH community safe – this is why we are implementing mandatory vaccination policy at CAMH.

Q: I am concerned about my personal health information being shared, specifically my vaccination status. Do I have to disclose my vaccination information?

A: Yes. The information provided by staff will be used internally by CAMH for the purpose of administration of the policy, outbreak planning and management, workforce management, scheduling and as otherwise permitted or required by law. Just like status on other vaccinations that are required at time of hire (for example, TB, tetanus, MMR), COVID-19 vaccination status is required from all employees, physicians, learners, students, and volunteers, including new hires. This information will be held in confidence, securely stored and shared only as required to achieve the above purposes.

Q: Why can't I just continue to be tested three times a week instead of getting vaccinated?

A: Testing does not reduce your chances of getting or spreading COVID-19. Vaccination does. That is why CAMH will permanently require vaccination against COVID-19 for all employees, physicians, contractors and agency staff, volunteers and learners/students as of October 19, 2021. If you are not vaccinated, we encourage you to begin the vaccination process as soon as possible.

Q: If I am not vaccinated before October 19, 2021, how do I complete the testing?

A: As of September 7, 2021, all unvaccinated staff – whether working on site or off site, full-time, part-time or casual – must complete a rapid antigen test at home three times per a week on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and report the results to [HSW through a portal](#).

Q: Where do I get my rapid antigen tests if I am not vaccinated?

A: Staff living in the GTA must pick up the test kits from Health, Safety and Wellness (HSW). HSW at the Queen St. site is located on the 5th floor of the Bell Gateway Building and is open 8am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. HSW at the College site is located on the first floor of CS and is open Monday mornings 8am to 12noon and Thursday afternoons 1pm to 4pm.

For staff living outside the GTA, please make arrangements through HSW to have your test kits delivered. Please contact hsw.covid@camh.ca to make arrangements.

Three times weekly testing on Monday, Wednesday and Friday is required for all unvaccinated staff, including those not working on site.

Q: I am fully vaccinated but would like to have home rapid antigen tests to test myself regularly. Can I pick them up from HSW?

A: Unfortunately at this point we are not able to make these tests widely available to all staff, only to staff who are not fully vaccinated.

Q: I have been working remotely since March 2020 and will continue to work remotely. Why do I need to get tested and then be vaccinated?

A: All CAMH employees may be required to be onsite on short notice. As health care workers, all staff are required to comply with the vaccination policy.

Q: What happens if I am still unvaccinated after October 19, 2021 and am placed on unpaid leave and I decide to get my first vaccine?

A: If you are still unvaccinated by October 19, 2021, you will be placed on an unpaid leave of absence. For those who decide to get vaccinated after that date, you will be permitted to return to work once you have submitted proof of vaccination to Health Safety and Wellness (HSW). Once back at work, you will be required to be tested three times a week until you are fully vaccinated. You will also be required to complete your vaccination with a second dose within the recommended interval (21 days for Pfizer, 28 days for Moderna) and provide proof as per our policy.

Q: I hear the rapid test are not accurate. Why are we using them?

A: The Panbio test are used by hospitals for home testing. No test is perfect, but the rapid antigen tests are more accurate with frequency of use. This is why we are requiring all staff who are not fully vaccinated to complete testing three times per week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and submit their results to HSW immediately upon completion of their test.

Q: How we will know how to do self testing?

A: Please [review this video](#) for detailed instructions on how to do the testing. HSW is also offering training appointments via Webex on an individual basis so that a nurse can watch an individual self-administer the test and give them instruction if needed. A schedule will be made available where you can sign up for an appointment. We are exploring some other supports and will monitor the home test result data and if necessary reassess additional supports.

Q: How will CAMH know if the home testing is done?

A: Anyone required to do home testing will have to write the date on the test with a Sharpie permanent marker and upload the results. They will also need to take a photo of the completed test showing the negative result. When they record their negative test result in the portal they will then receive a confirmation email of the recorded negative result which must be shown at screening. HSW is also finalizing a process for auditing of the home testing to ensure compliance.

Q: We are already short on staff across the clinical programs, why would CAMH put people on unpaid leave?

A: We are providing 6 weeks' notice of the mandatory vaccination to provide time for education, for people to talk to their physician/specialist or faith leader, and still have enough time to get both doses. In addition, the hospital will have time to address staffing to ensure safety of staff and patients.

Q: I had COVID-19. Do I still need to vaccinate?

A: Yes. CAMH will require full vaccination against COVID-19 for all employees. Vaccination helps to protect you even if you have already had COVID-19.

Q: I am currently on leave (maternity, parental, or any other approved leave), expected to return at a later date, post October 19, 2021. When do I need to be vaccinated?

A: All employees on leave and returning after October 19, 2021, will have to be fully vaccinated before their first day back.

Q: I have decided not to get vaccinated. Can I self-select to go on unpaid leave immediately?

A: No. Requests for unpaid leave of absence due to non-vaccination prior to October 19, 2021 will not be considered.

Q: Are new hires, students, and volunteers required to be fully vaccinated prior to their start date with CAMH?

A: Yes. As of September 7th, all new hires, students/learners and volunteers need to be fully vaccinated before their start date to be able to work or learn at CAMH. You are considered fully vaccinated 14 days after the second dose has been received.

Q: I am pregnant and have chosen not to get the vaccine. Does the policy still apply to me?

A: Health Canada has [provided guidance](#) for vaccinations for special populations. Specifically, they state that all pregnant individuals in the authorized age group are eligible and recommended to be vaccinated as soon as possible, at any stage in pregnancy, as COVID-19 infection during pregnancy can be severe (increased risk for hospitalization, ICU admission, mechanical ventilation and death compared to non-pregnant individuals) and the benefits of vaccination outweigh the risks.

If however you believe you qualify for a medical exemption during the course of your pregnancy, please contact HSW for review. HSW will review medical information submitted to

ensure it is in compliance with the standards for medical exemptions from vaccinations. This information must be submitted to HSW by September 21, 2021 to be compliant with the policy.

Regular testing is required to be done and reported during the period of review.

Q: I am not vaccinated but will receive my first dose by October 19, 2021. What do I need to do?

A: As soon as you receive your first dose you need to report it to HSW through the RedCap survey and you will need to book your second vaccine within the recommended interval (21 days for Pfizer, 28 days for Moderna) immediately. You will continue with home testing until you are fully vaccinated.

Q: When am I considered fully vaccinated?

A: You are considered fully vaccinated 14 days following the second dose of any [Health Canada approved vaccine](#), with the exception of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, which is only one dose.

Q. Where can I get vaccinated?

A: The CAMH Vaccine Clinic is located at 100 Stokes Street in the Sandi and Jim Treiving Gymnasium which is on the corner of Stokes Street and Gordon Bell Road at the CAMH Queen Street campus. The Clinic is open Tuesday to Thursday, 9am to 4pm to walk-ins and you can also [book an appointment](#). The Clinic has both Pfizer and Moderna available and also supports people with fear of needles or other medical anxieties. More information about the clinic can be found [here](#).

Alternatively, you may find that the [community offers appointment times](#) that may be more convenient to support your personal schedule.

Q: How do I let HSW know that I have received my COVID vaccine?

A: Follow [this link to report your vaccine status](#) Please make sure that you are using supported web browsers.

Q: I have received my vaccines outside of Canada with a vaccine not approved by Health Canada. Is there any issue?

A: We accept all Health Canada approved vaccines. If you have not received a Health Canada approved vaccine please contact your Public Health Unit to attain their guidance.

Q: Will you require proof that I have been vaccinated? How will I provide that proof?

A: Yes, as per the policy, you will need to report your vaccine status. Follow [this link](#) to report your vaccine status. Please make sure that you are using supported web browsers.

Q: I have misplaced my vaccine receipt, how do I get a copy of this?

A: Please go to [this link](#). You will require your Healthcare number and version code.

Q: How do I submit a copy of the vaccine receipt to HSW?

A: Your vaccine receipt can be upload through the [RedCap Survey](#).

Q: If we obtain 100% vaccination will other safety protocols be stopped?

A: No. While COVID-19 remains a public health concern, all screening, PPE, physical distancing and hand hygiene protocols will continue and need to be adhered to. Vaccinations are an important part of a set of ongoing measures required to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Q: What about visitors? Will they have to have be fully vaccinated?

A: CAMH is still restricted to essential visitors only. This policy is being reviewed and we will be able to provide more information in the near future.

Q. I uploaded my vaccination information into the CAMH RedCap survey but I didn't get an email confirmation that I had done so.

A. Please notify hsw.covid@camh.ca, who can arrange for a confirmation email to be resent to you, if you did not receive one.