

Influenza Vaccine Requirement for Attendance at Post-Secondary Institutions

Updated December 22, 2020

Beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, influenza vaccine will be required for all full-time undergraduate and graduate students under 30 years of age and all full- and part-time health science students at post-secondary institutions. Influenza vaccine is always important to receive to reduce the risk of getting sick with influenza, reduce the severity of disease if one does get sick (including the risk of hospitalization) due to influenza, as well as preventing the spread of influenza to others. During the COVID-19 pandemic, influenza vaccine will be especially critical to reduce the overall impact of respiratory illness on the population, protect vulnerable populations from severe illness, and decrease the overall burden on the healthcare system.

Which students need to receive influenza vaccine?

Requirements apply to all full-time undergraduate and graduate students under 30 years of age and all full- and part-time health science students. Student may have a medical or religious exemption.

When do students need to receive influenza vaccine?

Students must receive influenza vaccine for the current season (i.e., school year 2020-2021) by February 28, 2021. New students entering school before March 31, 2021 must have received a dose of vaccine for the current flu season for entry.

Are there any exemptions to receiving influenza vaccine?

Medical and religious exemptions are allowable in the state of Massachusetts. Medical exemptions must be renewed annually and include a statement from a physician stating that the vaccine is medically contraindicated for the student.

What type of influenza vaccine can students receive?

Any age-appropriate licensed influenza vaccine for the current season fulfills the requirement. This includes injectable and nasal spray vaccine types.

Should students without a documented dose of seasonal influenza vaccine be excluded on January 1st?

Enforcement of immunization requirements is determined at the local level. We encourage post-secondary institutions to work with families and healthcare providers to satisfy the requirements for students who are not compliant on January 1st. For the 2020-2021 school year **only**, influenza vaccine must be received by February 28, 2021. Post-secondary institutions are encouraged to work with families and healthcare providers to satisfy the

vaccination requirements for students who are not compliant by March 1, 2021.

What about students who enroll after December 31?

Students who enroll before March 31 must have a documented dose of influenza vaccine for the current influenza season (along with all other required vaccinations) when they start school.

What about students who enroll later in the spring?

Students enrolling after March 31 are not required to have a dose of influenza vaccine until they enroll in the Fall 2021 semester.

Will my institution have to report on influenza vaccine in the college immunization survey?

Yes—the surveys will be open as usual during the fall to input information on other required vaccines. There will also be a survey to report influenza vaccination rates for students at post-secondary institutions. The timing and details of the survey are still being developed. More information will be available soon.

Will influenza vaccine be required every year or just for the 2020-2021 school year?

Influenza vaccine is now a required vaccine for attendance at a post-secondary institution in Massachusetts and will be required annually as of December 31 for **all** students who will be on campus for any reason and are subject to immunization requirements. For school year 2020-2021 **only**, seasonal influenza vaccine must be received by February 28, 2021.

If my school will be providing instruction remotely, will students still need to meet immunization requirements?

The immunization requirements apply to all students who attend any classes or activities on campus, even once. If all instruction and activities are conducted remotely and the student will never be on campus in person, the requirements would not apply. If the first part of the year will be conducted remotely but later portions may be in person, we recommend collecting immunization records as early as possible to ensure all records are in place prior to students attending classes or activities in person.