



## **COVID-19 Mandatory Vaccination** **Frequently Asked Questions**

Date: **Dec. 27, 2021**



**Q: What Soldiers will be required to receive the vaccine and why?**

A: Every Soldier who is not otherwise exempt will be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to ensure our Soldiers and units are ready to fight and win. This is a readiness, health, and welfare priority for the total Army.

**Q: Are DA civilians required to get the vaccine?**

A: On Oct. 1, 2021, the Deputy Secretary of Defense issued "Mandatory Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination of DoD Civilian Employees" requiring all DOD civilian employees to comply with the president issued Executive Order 14043 which requires DOD civilian employees to be fully vaccinated by Nov. 22, 2021, subject to exemptions as required by law. To meet this requirement, individuals must be vaccinated with vaccines that are either fully licensed or authorized for emergency use by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

**Q: Can Soldiers be required to receive a vaccine if the specific product was manufactured prior to full FDA approval?**

A: Yes. The FDA approval applies to any batch of the approved vaccine, regardless of date of manufacture.

**Q: What is the Army's deadline for full vaccination?**

A: The Army ordered all commanders to begin implementing the Secretary of Defense's order requiring all service members to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 on August 24. The Army's vaccine mandate order provides further implementation instructions, and as with any other readiness requirement, commanders are responsible for ensuring their unit's overall compliance.

Active duty units are expected to be fully vaccinated by Dec. 15, 2021, and Reserve and National Guard units are expected to be fully vaccinated by June 30, 2022.

**Q: What is the timeline/deadline for DA civilians to receive the vaccine?**

A: In order to be fully vaccinated by Nov. 22, 2021, DOD civilian employees who are not currently fully vaccinated must meet the following deadlines based on the FDA licensed or emergency use authorized vaccine they choose:

Oct. 11: first dose deadline (if receiving the Moderna vaccine); Oct. 18: first dose deadline (if receiving the Comirnaty/Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine); Nov. 8: second dose deadline (if receiving the Moderna and Comirnaty/Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines); and Nov. 8: first (only) dose deadline (if receiving the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine).

**Q: What if a Soldier already completed an EUA or WHO authorized series of COVID-19 vaccines, do they have to start over with the FDA-approved vaccine?**

A: Soldiers who have completed an EUA or WHO authorized series are considered fully vaccinated and not required to start the series again with the FDA approved vaccine.

**Q: Are Soldiers who previously had COVID-19 considered vaccinated?**

A: No. Service members are considered fully vaccinated two weeks post completion of a two-dose series vaccine or two weeks post completion of a single dose vaccine.

**Q: Are DA civilians who previously had COVID-19 considered vaccinated?**

A: No. Civilian employees with previous COVID-19 infection(s) or previous serology are not considered fully vaccinated on that basis for the purposes of this mandate. Employees are considered fully vaccinated two weeks post completion of a two-dose series vaccine or two weeks post completion of a single dose vaccine. This is in accordance with current CDC recommendations that you should be vaccinated regardless of whether you already had COVID-19.

**Q: What happens if a Soldier refuses to receive the vaccine?**

A: Required vaccinations are nothing new to the U.S. military. Orders to receive the mandatory vaccine are lawful. Soldiers who refuse the vaccine order will first be counseled by their chain of command and medical providers, and face a mandatory general officer reprimand and potential relief of duties. Soldiers who are pending exemption requests will not be subject to adverse actions until the exemption is fully processed.

**Q: What happens if a DA civilian declines to the vaccine?**

A: Appropriate compliance with the Executive Order is the goal. Per OPM guidance, employees who refuse to be vaccinated or provide proof of vaccination are subject to disciplinary measures, up to and including removal or termination from Federal service. The Army will issue guidance regarding disciplinary measures for refusal when the Federal Safe Workforce Task Force and OSD clarify guidance regarding disciplinary measures for refusal.

**Q: Can commanders order Soldiers to be forcibly vaccinated?**

A: No. There will be no involuntary (forcible) immunizations. Everyone will be treated with dignity and respect. However, orders to receive the mandatory vaccine are lawful, and failure to comply may be punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

**Q: What about Soldiers with medical or religious grounds to refuse the vaccine? Can they request an exemption?**

A: There are two types of exemption: medical and administrative. Administrative exemptions include religious accommodations, as well as others enumerated in AR 40-562. Soldiers requesting an administrative exemption must speak to their commander. Soldiers who believe they require a medical exemption must consult with their primary care manager.

**Q: Can DA civilians request an exemption to the vaccine requirement?**

A: Yes. Information on the process for civilian employees to request an exemption is anticipated to be published in FHP 23, Revision 1. Civilian employees anticipating submission of an exemption for medical reasons through their supervisory chain should begin the process of

coordination with their health care provider(s) for consultation and supporting documentation to support exemption requests in preparation for submission.

Exemption requests will be handled on a case-by-case basis as per pending FHP 23 Revision 1 and any additional army guidance issued, and civilian employees should be prepared to initiate vaccine sequence immediately if exemption requests are denied or the employee is unable to meet exemption criteria once identified.

**Q: Will Soldiers who request an exemption receive adverse action while awaiting a decision?**

A: Soldiers with pending active requests for an immunization exemption submitted IAW AR 40-562 and AR 600-20 are temporarily deferred from immunization, pending the outcome of their request or any appeal of a denied request. Commanders will not take adverse action against Soldiers with pending exemption requests.

**Q: Will DA civilians be subject to disciplinary action while they are waiting on a decision regarding their request for a medical or religious exemption to the COVID-19 vaccine requirement?**

A: Disciplinary action will not be initiated against civilian employees who will not achieve fully vaccinated status by Nov. 22, 2021, if they are pending a decision on a medical or religious exemption request. Exemption requests will be handled on a case by case basis as per pending FHP 23 revision 1 and any additional Army guidance issued, and civilian employees should be prepared to initiate vaccine sequence immediately if exemption requests are denied or the employee is unable to meet exemption criteria once identified.

**Q: Who approves requests for religious exemptions?**

A: TSG is the only approval or disapproval authority for immunization accommodation requests. The ASA (M&RA) is the final appeal authority. The ASA (M&RA)'s decision is final. Any religious accommodation request for an immunization exemption must comply with the requirements described in AR 600-20, Appendix P-2b, and DODI 1300.17, "Religious Liberty in the Military Services," September 1, 2020.

**Q: Are Family members of Soldiers required to be vaccinated?**

A: No, while we encourage everyone to protect themselves and their loved ones by getting vaccinated, only uniformed Soldiers are required to receive the vaccine.

**Q: Are Soldiers still able to receive their vaccine off-post from civilian medical providers?**

A: Yes, if a Soldier completes an EUA or WHO authorized vaccine series at an off-post location, they should submit documentation to their medical treatment facility so their immunization records are updated.

**Q: Where can DA civilians receive the vaccine?**

A: In accordance with Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccine Guidance," Dec. 7, 2020, DOD civilian employees are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at any DOD vaccination site, including military medical treatment facilities. They may also opt to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at locations other than DOD vaccination sites, including retail stores, private medical practices, and/or local and State public health department sites.