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Respiratory Virus Policy

Purpose

Respiratory viruses are highly contagious and can spread before symptoms appear. The most efficient way to prevent transmission of these illnesses is through vaccination. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends staying up to date with all respiratory virus season vaccines including influenza and COVID-19. Piedmont Healthcare is committed to the health and wellbeing of our patients and Workforce Members, believing that vaccination is the safest and most effective tool to reduce the spread of respiratory viruses. Accordingly, protecting oneself and safeguarding patients from respiratory viruses is an essential job function for all Workforce Members.

Scope

This policy applies to all Piedmont Healthcare, Inc. ("Piedmont") Workforce Members, which includes any person authorized to conduct or perform work on Piedmont property or on behalf of Piedmont on an ongoing basis, whether employed by Piedmont or employed by a third party. This includes all employees, licensed practitioners, employed and non-employed contract and agency staff, students, volunteers, and vendors.

All Workforce Members are strongly encouraged to stay up to date with Influenza and COVID-19 vaccination each year, including remote Workforce Members.

Definitions

Workforce Members - Any person authorized to conduct or perform work on Piedmont property or on

behalf of Piedmont, whether employed by Piedmont or employed by a third party. This generally includes:

- All employees, full time, part time, and PRN
- Licensed practitioners, employed and non-employed
- Students, trainees, volunteers
- Contract and agency staff
- Vendors who perform work for Piedmont property on an ongoing basis

Influenza (flu) - a mild to severe contagious illness caused by viruses that infect the respiratory tract.

Influenza vaccine - a preparation of influenza antigens (live or killed virus), which stimulate the production of specific antibodies when introduced to the body. These antibodies provide protection against influenza virus infection.

COVID-19 - (coronavirus disease 2019) is a disease caused by a virus named SARS-CoV-2. It can be very contagious and spreads quickly.

Respiratory Virus Season – Occurs annually and is a period of time where we are most likely to see increased circulation of many respiratory viruses (e.g., COVID-19, flu and RSV). The season typically begins in the fall and goes through the winter months into early spring. However, increased levels of circulating respiratory viruses can occur outside of this time period.

Updated COVID-19 Vaccine- Everyone 6 years and older should get 1 updated Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, regardless of whether they've received any [original COVID-19 vaccines](#).

- Receipt of one (1) updated Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine; or,
- Receipt of Novavax COVID-19 vaccine doses authorized for your age group.

Vaccination Program Period - Piedmont's respiratory virus season vaccination program is from September 1st through October 31st annually.

Policy

Vaccine Requirements:

Flu- All Workforce Members are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated against influenza each year. Vaccines are offered within Employee Health and Safety beginning on September 1st. Workforce Members who choose to decline the flu vaccination, must complete the declination process. This does not apply to remote vendors or contractors who may not come to a Piedmont facility as part of their regular duties and only provide support services outside of the physical locations.

COVID-19 All Workforce Members are strongly encouraged to stay up to date with the latest Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccines are not offered through Employee Health, but may be available through community partners at your entity. Workforce Members who choose to decline COVID-19 vaccination, must complete the declination process. This does not apply to remote vendors or contractors who may not come to a Piedmont facility as part of

their regular duties and only provide support services outside of the physical locations.

The original Pfizer and Moderna mRNA COVID-19 vaccines were monovalent. As of April 18, 2023, monovalent vaccines are no longer recommended or authorized in the United States. Instead, as of April 18, 2023, the only mRNA COVID-19 vaccines authorized by the FDA are the updated bivalent vaccines, which became available on September 2, 2022, for people aged 12 years and older. An additional updated monovalent COVID-19 vaccine is expected to be released for use by fall 2023. The updated vaccine will protect against the Omicron variant XBB. 1.5.

- You are up to date for the 2023-2024 Respiratory Virus Season COVID-19 Requirements once you receive one (1) updated Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine by Nov. 1, 2023.
- Workforce Members who receive a bivalent Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine between July 1, 2023, and Oct. 31, 2023, will be considered up to date
- Workforce Members who received a bivalent Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine between September 2, 2022, and June 30, 2023, should receive the updated monovalent XBB variant vaccine

Piedmont strongly encourages all workforce members to receive an updated COVID-19 vaccine.

More information about COVID-19 vaccines and the vaccine approval process is available on the [CDC's website](#).

For current workforce members, the vaccination program is from September 1st through October 31st each year. Current workforce members are required to have their vaccination status updated in the Workforce Vaccination Tracker by October 31st. New workforce members have 30 days to comply with this policy, where day one is their New Employee Orientation date. Workforce members who initially decline either vaccine are able and encouraged to update their vaccinations throughout the respiratory season. If updated, vaccinations must be reported through the Workforce Vaccination Tracker.

Reporting Vaccines:

Vaccines received through Employee Health at Piedmont will be documented in your Workforce Vaccination Tracker record.

All Workforce Members who receive a vaccine outside of Piedmont Employee Health, including all other Piedmont providers, are required to report through the [Workforce Vaccination Tracker](#).

Declination Process:

Workforce Members who do not receive an updated COVID-19 or annual flu vaccine must submit a signed declination for vaccination. Signing a declination is an annual requirement. Declinations should be completed through the [Workforce Vaccination Tracker](#).

Vaccine Based Masking Guidance:

Masking is a way to mitigate the spread of viral respiratory illnesses. When in a clinical area, workforce members are **required** to mask if they are not considered up to date for both their COVID-19 **and** flu

vaccines. Clinical area will be determined by entity leadership. This guidance is in effect from November 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024. If indicated, additional masking guidance may be recommended by Infection Prevention on an entity specific basis.

Guidelines:

- Upon hire, employees must record their vaccination status and vaccination information using [Piedmont's Workforce Vaccination Tracker](#) ("WVT"). Non-employed Workforce Members may be required to provide proof of vaccination through other channels.
- All Workforce Members are required to follow all other Piedmont policies and guidelines regarding COVID-19 and flu, including but not limited to guidelines related to personal protective equipment (PPE) and practicing diligent hand hygiene. Employees are expected to act with integrity and are accountable for compliance with this policy and the [COVID-19 Expectations and Accountability policy](#). See Piedmont's [PPE- What to Wear When](#) guidelines.
- Piedmont will continue to track COVID-19 positivity with internal facility surveillance in conjunction with available CDC and Georgia Department of Public Health (GDPH) data. Piedmont will provide guidance on establishing infection prevention and control (IPC) practices if there is an increase in COVID-19 or respiratory transmission in a local entity's community (e.g., masking during patient care vs. universal masking).

Illness in the Workplace:

FLU

- Any Workforce Members who are experiencing any symptoms of illness are not to report to work and follow all time away procedures.
- If a Workforce Member tests positive for the flu, they must remain out of work until fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducers (e.g., Tylenol, Motrin, etc.).
- If an employee tests positive for the flu, follow the [Employee Infections and Communicable Diseases Policy](#).
- If symptoms consistent with respiratory illness (e.g., cough runny nose, sneezing) are still present workforce members should wear a mask during patient encounters or when in a shared space.
- Flu test results do not need to be reported to Employee Health or the Employee Self-Service Portal.
- Employees must initiate a leave request through [ESS AbsenceTracker](#) if the employee was incapacitated more than three (3) consecutive calendar days.

COVID-19

- Any Workforce Members who are experiencing any symptoms of illness are not to report to work and follow all time away procedures.
- Workforce Members should use Piedmont's Self-Service Portal to report their COVID-19 test results and receive return to work clearance.

- **If a Workforce Member** tests positive for COVID-19 they must remain out of work for 5 days from symptom onset (where symptom onset is day 0), be fever free for 24 hours, without the use of fever reducers (e.g., Tylenol, Motrin, etc.), and have improvement in respiratory symptoms.
- Once returned to work, workforce members should wear a medical/surgical mask at least through day 10 of illness. If symptoms consistent with respiratory illness (e.g., cough runny nose, sneezing) are still present after day 10 medical/surgical masks should be worn during patient encounters or when in a shared space.
- If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, follow the [Employee Infections and Communicable Diseases Policy](#).
- Employees must initiate a leave request through the [ESS AbsenceTracker](#) if the employee was incapacitated more than three (3) consecutive calendar days.

Accountability

All Workforce Members are accountable for compliance with this policy. Workforce Members must attest to having received their updated COVID-19 vaccine and Flu vaccine or must complete the declination process by the applicable deadline.

Other Workforce Members who have not attested to having received the Flu and COVID-19 vaccine or who have not completed the declination process by the applicable deadline may be prohibited from providing services at Piedmont.

All Workforce Members who fail to get both an updated COVID-19 and seasonal Flu vaccine are required to wear a medical surgical mask when in a clinical area from November 1 thru March 31 of the current Respiratory Virus Season. Masks must be removed and replaced if they become moist, soiled, torn, or worn thin from their original form.

All Workforce Members are expected to follow the guidelines noted above, including the [PPE-What to Wear When](#) guidelines. For employees, failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Non-employed Workforce Members not compliant with this policy will be prohibited from providing services for Piedmont.

References

The Center for Disease Control and Epidemiology, Association for Professionals on Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC), Society of Healthcare in America (SHEA), Infectious Disease Society of America (IDSA), Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC), and Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

All Revision Dates

9/1/2023, 8/17/2023

Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
	Lisa Lohr-Spurlin: Exec Dir - Employee Relations	9/1/2023
	Elisa Velez: Dir Leave & HR Compliance	8/31/2023

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