



## Kaleida Health

### 2017-2018 Influenza Season Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Will Kaleida Health require healthcare personnel who do not receive an influenza vaccine wear a mask this flu season?**

Yes. A mandate from the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), “Regulation and Prevention of Influenza Transmission by Healthcare and Residential Facility and Agency Personnel,” requires that all healthcare facilities document the vaccination status of all healthcare personnel.

Every employee, volunteer, student, resident, contracted employee or vendor must provide documentation of having received the influenza vaccine. Unvaccinated employees are required to submit a signed declination form and wear a surgical mask at all times in areas where patients or residents are typically present during the entire influenza season.

This regulation applies to everyone who works in a Kaleida Health facility, regardless of their title or job position.

#### **When will we be required to begin wearing a mask?**

The mask mandate will go into effect when the New York State Commissioner of Health declares that influenza is “prevalent” in the area. The mandate will remain in effect until he declares that influenza is no longer “prevalent.”

#### **Where will we be required to wear a mask?**

Unvaccinated personnel will be required to wear a surgical mask at all times while in areas where patients or residents are typically present. This includes all public areas within any Kaleida Health facility.

#### **Where can I get vaccinated?**

Employee Health will provide flu clinics throughout the fall as well as offer the vaccine at each site during scheduled office hours. Employees are encouraged to be vaccinated during the clinics as they are intended to accommodate a larger number of employees.

#### **Where can I find the vaccination schedule?**

The vaccination schedule is available on Employee Health’s [KaleidaScope](#) page. Select “Flu Clinic Hours” under Department Links.

#### **What do I need to bring to receive a vaccination?**

Employees must have their Kaleida Health ID badge to receive the vaccination from Employee Health.

#### **What does the sticker on my Kaleida Health ID badge mean?**

At the time of vaccination, a Kaleida Health Employee Health nurse will apply a sticker on the right lower corner of the employee’s Kaleida Health ID badge to provide visual verification of vaccination.

Employee Health or a site designee will apply a yellow sticker on the right lower corner of the Kaleida Health ID badge of those employees who decline vaccination.

**How do I get a sticker if I am vaccinated through a community provider or pharmacy vendor?**

Employees vaccinated by a community provider or pharmacy vendor must show official proof of vaccination to the Corporate Employee Health Department **during office hours** in order to receive the sticker.

- Volunteers should submit documentation of having received the vaccine elsewhere or a signed declination form to the volunteer office at their site.
- VNA employees should provide documentation to their Human Resources Department.
- Students should be cleared via their affiliated schools and the Clinical Education Department.

Documentation of vaccination from an outside source must be on official letterhead and include the name and the address of the individual who ordered or administered the vaccine. The document must also contain the date of the vaccination and signed consent of the employee.

**What if I do not want the influenza vaccine for any reason, including a medical reason?**

Employees can visit a site flu clinic to decline the vaccine. Employees who decline the influenza vaccine must complete a “Declination of Influenza Vaccine” form available on [Employee Health’s website](#). Employees who refuse vaccination due to a medical reason must also have their primary care physician complete the “DOH Medical Exemption Statement” available on Employee Health’s website.

Employee Health or a site designee will apply a yellow sticker on the right lower corner of the Kaleida Health ID badge of those employees who decline vaccination.

**Where do I send my declination form?**

Please send a hard copy of the completed declination form and medical exemption statement, if applicable, through inter-departmental mail to:

Corporate Employee Health  
Larkin at Exchange, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
726 Exchange Street  
Buffalo, NY 14210

Please do not fax or email documentation.

**What are the requirements for wearing the mask and where will I get one?**

Department managers will stock and supply surgical masks free of charge for their employees. The surgical mask must cover both the nose and mouth. All ear loops or ties must be worn as intended by mask design. The mask must be pinched across the bridge of the nose.

**How often should I change my mask?**

The mask should be changed when it becomes damp, wet, soiled or damaged. At a minimum, a new mask must be worn each work shift or after leaving a patient care unit and before re-entering the same or a new patient care unit.

Regardless of vaccination status, masks must be removed and discarded in a regular waste container before leaving the room of a patient with confirmed or suspected influenza.

Strict hand washing always applies before entering or leaving a patient's room as well as after touching the mask.

**If I work in the kitchen am I required to wear a mask?**

Dietary and food service workers who work in a cafeteria where patients are typically present or travel to and from patient units will be required to wear a surgical mask.

As specified in the regulation, dietary workers who work **inside** the kitchen where patients are not present and who do not come in close proximity to patients while at their work station or while traveling to and from their work station will not be required to mask.

**What if I provide speech therapy?**

Personnel who provide speech therapy services may remove the mask when necessary to deliver care, such as modeling speech. The mask may also be removed by any person who lip reads as a means of communication.

**Do I still need to wear a mask if I “had the flu”?**

Because the seasonal influenza vaccine contains four strains of inactive influenza virus, an employee would need to have had the flu four times during the current influenza season, once with each strain confirmed by a physician and a laboratory, in order for the vaccine to provide no additional protection.

**Do I need to wear a mask for the two weeks following vaccination while developing immunity?**

No, it is not required in the current regulation. However, personnel are encouraged to get vaccinated well before influenza season is expected to begin.

**What if I lose or need to replace my ID badge or sticker?**

If an ID badge is lost, the employee will be responsible for obtaining a new badge from security and a new sticker from Employee Health. Employee Health will need to verify proof of vaccination or declination in these cases.

Security will provide a replacement sticker for employees who require a new ID badge. Such employees must hand in their old ID badge with the sticker intact. This will occur only during security's regular badge issuing hours.

The employee must wear a mask until a replacement can be obtained. There are no exceptions to wearing a mask.

**What if I do not work in a hospital or patient care facility?**

Employees at all Kaleida Health locations are required to comply with the new regulation. Employees who do not work in patient care facilities and do not get the influenza vaccine will be required to wear a surgical mask when entering any facility where patients are typically present. They are also required to provide documentation of their vaccination status.

**What if I do not comply?**

Kaleida Health strongly recommends that unvaccinated healthcare personnel, regardless of department, comply with the regulation and wear a surgical mask at all times to prevent the spread of influenza amongst unvaccinated co-workers and patients.

Managers have been instructed to follow the Kaleida Health Progressive Discipline Policy for documented reports of non-compliance.

**Who should I contact if I have more questions?**

Please contact your site Employee Health Department:

Buffalo General Medical Center	859-2180
DeGraff Memorial Hospital	690-2382
Larkin at Exchange	859-8500
Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital	568-3791
Women & Children’s Hospital of Buffalo	878-7717

The influenza program will be evaluated annually and include an evaluation of the reasons given for declining the influenza vaccine. The annual evaluation will document Kaleida Health’s efforts towards achieving the 90 percent compliance rate established in the National Influenza Initiatives for 2020. The methodology used will meet the NHSN System data requirements.