

# COVID-19 vaccine requirement

*Kristina M. Johnson, PhD, President | August 24, 2021*

Dear Students, Faculty and Staff:

The rising prevalence of the more transmissible Delta variant is fueling the resurgence of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations – including in young and otherwise healthy unvaccinated people. Central, southern and southeastern Ohio have now recorded the highest number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients since January. Further, the number of hospitalized patients in these areas of the state rose an alarming 448% between mid-July and mid-August.

Throughout the pandemic, the university has taken measures to help keep our Ohio State community safe and healthy. With Monday's news that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has granted full approval to the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, Ohio State will now require every student, faculty and staff member to be vaccinated against COVID-19. The university is taking this step because vaccines are the safest and most effective form of protection against COVID-19. We are focused on enhancing the health and safety of our community. This step will increase our ability to support our students in continuing their educational experiences as well as help protect our current and the state's future workforce.

Scientists have learned a significant amount about the Delta variant, and this research underscores why being vaccinated is critical to combating COVID-19. Studies show that the Delta variant can be orders of magnitude (in one study, 1,000 times) more severe and it affects younger people in higher percentages than the original coronavirus strain. Additionally, vaccinated individuals can transmit the Delta variant – at least for the first few days that they are infected – even if they are not sick themselves. These factors combined mean it is also much more transmissible than the initial strains of COVID-19.

The good news is that vaccinated individuals, though they can get COVID-19, are less contagious than unvaccinated individuals and they are significantly less likely to be hospitalized or die from the virus. Masks also continue to be an effective tool at combating the spread of COVID-19. That is why we are implementing our vaccine requirement with urgency as well as continuing our protocol to require everyone to wear masks indoors regardless of vaccination status.

The deadline for all Ohio State students, faculty and staff to have at least the first dose is Friday, October 15, 2021. For people receiving a two-dose sequence, the second dose deadline is November 15, 2021. This vaccination requirement mirrors the Wexner Medical Center's [announcement \(link is external\)](#). More than 73% of our community has had at least one shot already, and this step will further protect us all. We also stand the best chance of continuing to enjoy the traditions that we love throughout the academic year with higher vaccination rates in our campus community.

If you have already been vaccinated, thank you. Details about the reporting process will be announced in the coming weeks.

Getting your vaccine is [free and easy](#):

- You can walk in for an appointment today or schedule one on Ohio State's Columbus campus or at Wexner Medical Center locations around central Ohio. There are also sites throughout the state of Ohio, including in the communities in which the university's campuses are located, so it is easy to [find \(link is external\)](#) a location near you.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is currently the only FDA fully approved vaccine, though Moderna, Johnson & Johnson or World Health Organization-approved vaccines will also be accepted to meet this requirement. Please note that boosters may be required in the future. A limited set of exemptions will be approved on a case-by-case basis ([read more about the exemptions](#)). Additional information, including non-compliance measures, is available on the [Safe and Healthy Buckeyes website](#).

There is strong support for this requirement in our community, including student, faculty, staff and university leadership. From the beginning of the pandemic, we have made data-driven, science-based decisions and followed the guidance of medical and public health professionals, including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state and local public health partners. The health and safety of our community is and always will be a top priority. Thank you for doing your part to protect our campus community.

Sincerely yours,

Kristina M. Johnson, PhD

President