

# COVID VACCINE INFORMATION FOR LEADERSHIP



**This FAQ is current as of October 5, 2021, however, information and guidance is being updated rapidly by the CDC, FDA and DoD.**

## Vaccine Mandate FAQs

[Q. What is the deadline for Navy and Marine Corps Service members, Government Service Civilians and Contract employees to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?](#)

[Q. If I start a series with one vaccine type, i.e. Moderna, can I finish with another type, i.e. Pfizer?](#)

[Q. If I received a vaccine that was not on the World Health Organization \(WHO\) Emergency Use List \(EUL\) or authorized/approved by the FDA am I considered fully vaccinated?](#)

[Q. Do I need to take the COVID-19 vaccine if I'm approved to separate or retire from the Service?](#)

[Q. Will providers accept anyone who says they're eligible to receive a booster shot? Will people need to show a doctor's note/prescription or other documentation?](#)

[Q. Does this change the definition of "fully vaccinated" for those eligible for booster shots?](#)

[Q. When can I get a COVID-19 vaccine booster if I am NOT in one of the recommended groups?](#)

[Q. Are Service members who are breastfeeding exempt from the COVID-19 vaccine requirement?](#)

[Q. Can COVID-19 vaccines be given with other vaccines during pregnancy?](#)

[Q. Why is the COVID-19 vaccine required for pregnant Service members?](#)

[Q. Will individuals on terminal leave be recalled to receive a COVID-19 vaccination?](#)

[Q. What is the policy for handling medical deferral letters from civilian providers?](#)

[Q. What is the process for submitting a medical waiver after an adverse reaction?](#)

[Q. What is the process for submitting a medical waiver packet?](#)

[Q. What update interval is expected if approved for a temporary exemption?](#)

[Q. Where and who does the reporting need to go to if approved for temporary medical exemptions?](#)

[Q. Who is the appropriate authority to approve a temporary exemption that will or is expected to be alleviated in the future?](#)

[Q. How is Comirnaty \(COVID-19 VACCINE, mRNA\) related to the PFIZER-BIONTECH COVID-19 VACCINE?](#)

[Q. If a Sailor is approved for exemption, do we anticipate the Sailors to be permitted to go on ships and to sea or would this restrict their ability to serve?](#)

[Q. What medical exceptions/waivers will be made for the mandate?](#)

[Q. Is Pregnancy a valid reason for a COVID-19 vaccine exemption or deferral?](#)

[Q. Will a deferral option to take the vaccine after having the baby be available?](#)

[Q. If a Sailor received the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, will they still be required to get the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine?](#)

[Q. Will Service members be mandated to take the Pfizer vaccine or will the other shots \(Moderna and J&J\) still be an option?](#)

[Q. Are booster shots/3rd doses going to be mandated as well?](#)

[Q. Will the vaccine be required if the Sailor already had COVID?](#)

[Q. How will the HPCON guidance change after the force becomes immunized?](#)

[Q. Will Sailors still need to wear masks if the vaccine is mandatory?](#)

[Q. Can local providers decline to submit a Service member's desire for a medical waiver if deemed not clinically indicated?](#)

[Q. Can providers approve a temporary waiver at the local level?](#)

[Q. May service members \(active or reserve\) request a waiver for a religious accommodation?](#)

[Q. What is the likelihood of attaining an approval for a religious accommodation waiver?](#)

[Q. Are waivers permanent?](#)

[Q. Will family members living overseas on or off base have different requirements or will they be sent back CONUS if they refuse vaccination?](#)

[Q. What happens to Service members who refuse the vaccine without a waiver?](#)

[Q. Why do I need to see a Chaplain for an interview as part of a request for religious accommodation?](#)

[Q. Does the practice of my religious faith prevent me from getting the vaccine?](#)

**Q. What is the deadline for Navy and Marine Corps Service members, Government Service (GS) Civilians and Contract employees to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?**

**A.** For Service members, the deadline to become fully vaccinated (defined as two weeks after the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose in a two-dose vaccination series) is 28 November 2021 for the Active Component (AC) and 28 December 2021 for the Reserve Component (RC). If receiving the Pfizer manufactured vaccine, AC must receive their 1<sup>st</sup> no later than (NLT) 24 October 2021, and RC must receive their 1<sup>st</sup> dose NLT 23 November 2021.

Safer Federal Workforce Task Force guidance (Presidential Executive Order 14043) specifies the deadline for GS Civilians to become fully vaccinated is 22 November 2021 and Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) guidance directs Contract employees to be fully vaccinated by 8 December 2021. If receiving the Pfizer manufactured vaccine, GS Civilians must receive their 1<sup>st</sup> dose NLT 18 October 2021 and Contract employees must receive their first dose NLT 4 November 2021. AS OF OCT 4 2021

Service/Position	Deadline	Pfizer 1st dose required NLT	Pfizer 2nd Dose required NLT	Voluntary-EUA Moderna 1st Dose Required NLT	Voluntary-EUA Moderna 2nd Dose Required NLT	Voluntary-EUA Janssen Required NLT
Navy/Marine Corps Active Duty	28-Nov-21	24-Oct-21	14-Nov-21	17-Oct-21	14-Nov-21	14-Nov-21
Navy/Marines Corps Reserves	28-Dec-21	23-Nov-21	14-Dec-21	16-Nov-21	14-Dec-21	14-Dec-21
GS Civilians	22-Nov-21	18-Oct-21	8-Nov-21	11-Oct-21	8-Nov-21	8-Nov-21
Contractors	8-Dec-21	4-Nov-21	25-Nov-21	28-Oct-21	25-Nov-21	25-Nov-21

Force Health Protection Supplement 23 (FHP 23), revision 1 is expected to be published by Friday, 8 October 2021 and will contain specific details, including responsibilities for civilian employees and supervisors.

**Q. If I start a series with one vaccine type, i.e. Moderna, can I finish with another type, i.e. Pfizer?**

**A.** This is not recommended. Data on the safety and efficacy of a mixed-product series are limited. Both doses of the series should be completed with the same product. In *exceptional* situations in which the mRNA vaccine product given for the first dose cannot be determined or is no longer available, any available mRNA COVID-19 vaccine may be administered at a minimum interval of 28 days between doses to complete the mRNA COVID-19 vaccination series.

(<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/clinical-considerations/covid-19-vaccines-us.html>). AS OF OCT 1 2021

**Q. If I received a vaccine that was not on the World Health Organization (WHO) Emergency Use List (EUL) or authorized/approved by the FDA am I considered fully vaccinated?**

**A.** No. A series using a WHO, EUL or FDA authorized/approved vaccine should be started 28 days after the last shot of the non-WHO or FDA vaccine series. AS OF OCT 1 2021

**Q. Do I need to take the COVID-19 vaccine if I'm approved to separate or retire from the Service?**

**A.** Yes. Personnel separating or retiring beyond the 90-day (Active) or 120-day (Reserve) required vaccine window (28 Nov AC, 28 Dec RC) are NOT exempt. The administrative exemptions listed in BUMEDINST 6230.15B for personnel who are separating or retiring are not applicable for the COVID-19 vaccine. The COVID-19 vaccine is not a deployment (mobility) immunization for which the exemption provisions were written. Ref [BUMEDNOTE 6230/16SEP21](#), Inapplicability of Administrative Exemption for Separation or Retirement to Immunization from Coronavirus Disease 2019.

Sailors currently on Terminal Leave, verified by member's command, may be coded in the Medical Readiness Reporting System (MRRS) as administratively exempt. AS OF OCT 1, 2021

**Q. Will providers accept anyone who says they're eligible to receive a booster shot? Will people need to show a doctor's note/prescription or other documentation?**

**A.** It's important to note that individuals can self-attest (i.e. self-report that they are eligible) and receive a booster shot wherever vaccines are offered. This will help ensure there are not additional barriers to access for these select populations receiving their booster shot.

**Q. Does this change the definition of "fully vaccinated" for those eligible for booster shots?**

**A.** People are still considered fully vaccinated two weeks after their second dose in a 2-shot series, such as the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines, or two weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as the J&J/Janssen vaccine. This definition applies to all people, including those who receive an additional dose as recommended for moderate to severely immunocompromised people and those who receive a booster shot.

**Q. When can I get a COVID-19 vaccine booster if I am NOT in one of the recommended groups?**

**A.** Additional populations may be recommended to receive a booster shot as more data becomes available. The COVID-19 vaccines approved and authorized in the United States continue to be effective at reducing risk of severe disease, hospitalization, and death. However, the virus that causes COVID-19 constantly evolves. Experts are looking at all available data to understand how well the vaccines are working for different populations. This includes looking at how new variants, like Delta, affect vaccine effectiveness. AS OF OCT 1 2021

**Q. Can flu vaccines and COVID-19 vaccines be given at the same time?**

**A.** Yes, Service members can get their flu vaccines and COVID-19 vaccines at the same time. AS OF SEPT 23 2021

**Q. Are Service members who are breastfeeding exempt from the COVID-19 vaccine requirement?**

**A.** No, individuals who are breastfeeding shall receive the COVID-19 vaccine and can continue to breastfeed their children after vaccination. COVID-19 antibodies pass

through breastmilk and protect breastfeeding children from the virus, which can occur for at least 6 weeks post-vaccination. None of the COVID-19 vaccines include live viruses that can be passed through the breast milk. AS OF SEPT 23 2021

**Q. Can COVID-19 vaccines be given with other vaccines during pregnancy?**

**A.** COVID-19 vaccines may be given with other pregnancy-approved vaccines without regard to timing. AS OF SEPT 23 2021

**Q. Why is the COVID-19 vaccine required for pregnant Service members?**

**A.** The benefits of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy significantly outweigh the risks. Current data suggest that pregnant people with COVID-19 are at increased risk of more severe illness compared to non-pregnant people, including risk of Intensive Care Unit (ICU) admission, needing a breathing machine, needing a machine to put oxygen in the blood because the lungs are not working, and death of the pregnant person and/or the baby. Additionally, COVID-19 infection increases risks for other negative pregnancy outcomes and preterm birth. While data does show that people can still become infected with the COVID-19 virus after vaccination (although the infection rate is much lower in vaccinated people), studies show that these people have a milder and shorter disease course when compared to an unvaccinated person infected with the virus. The CDC, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG), and Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine (SMFM) strongly recommend vaccination of pregnant people or individuals planning to become pregnant. Studies show that when pregnant people receive a COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy, their bodies build antibodies against COVID-19. This suggests that COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy may help protect babies against COVID-19. AS OF SEPT 23 2021

**Q. What is the policy for handling medical deferral letters from civilian providers?**

**A.** Please refer to the [BUMEDNOTE 6300](#) for medical exemption guidance.

AS OF OCT 1 2021

**Q. What is the process for submitting a medical waiver after an adverse reaction?**

**A.** Please refer to the [BUMEDNOTE 6300](#) for medical exemption guidance.

AS OF OCT 1 2021

**Q. What is the process for submitting a medical waiver packet?**

**A.** Please refer to the [BUMEDNOTE 6300](#) for medical exemption guidance.

AS OF OCT 1 2021

**Q. What update interval is expected if approved for a temporary exemption?**

**A.** Temporary medical exemptions last no more than thirty days but can be renewed for the duration of the exempted medical condition. AS OF SEPT 9 2021

**Q. Where and who does the reporting need to go to if approved for temporary medical exemptions?**

**A.** Temporary medical exemptions are reported in the member's medical record and Medical Readiness Reporting System (MRRS). Please see [BUMEDNOTE 6150](#), Guidance for Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination Deferral Status Reporting. AS OF OCT

1, 2021



**Q. Who is the appropriate authority to approve a temporary exemption that will or is expected to be alleviated in the future?**

**A.** Navy medical providers, defined as any uniformed, Navy-employed civilian, or contract licensed independent medical practitioner whose scope of practice encompasses immunization healthcare delivery, and Independent Duty Corpsmen.

AS OF SEPT 9 2021

**Q. How is Comirnaty (COVID-19 VACCINE, mRNA) related to the PFIZER-BIONTECH COVID-19 VACCINE?**

**A.** The FDA-approved Pfizer-BioNTech product [Comirnaty](#) (COVID-19 Vaccine, mRNA) and the FDA-authorized Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine under EUA have the same formulation and can be used interchangeably to provide the COVID-19 vaccination series without presenting any safety or effectiveness concerns. Therefore, providers can use doses distributed under EUA to administer the vaccination series as if the doses were the licensed vaccine. For purposes of administration, doses distributed under the EUA are interchangeable with the licensed doses. The [Vaccine Information Fact Sheet for Recipients and Caregivers](#) provides additional information about both the approved and authorized vaccine.

Per the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), ASN(M&RA) memorandum/8SEP21, Use of Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine for Mandatory Vaccination, indicates the Pfizer-BioNTech and Comirnaty vaccines are the same formulation and are interchangeable, and can be utilized for the Secretary of Defense COVID-19 vaccination mandate. AS OF SEPT 3 2021

**Q. If a Sailor is approved for exemption, do we anticipate the Sailors to be permitted to go on ships and to sea or would this restrict their ability to serve?**

**A.** BUMED recommends 100% vaccination for all units including operational units. We anticipate the combatant commands will also require the COVID-19 vaccine for theatre entrance. AS OF SEPT 3 2021

**Q. What medical exceptions/waivers will be made for the mandate? (e.g. pregnant, undergoing invitro-fertilization/hormone therapy, breast feeding, prior reactions to vaccines, etc.)?**

**A.** Currently, the only exemptions listed are previous allergic reaction to the specific vaccine (i.e., during first dose of Pfizer), known/documentated allergy to any of Pfizer ingredients. CDC recommends the vaccine for pregnant women. AS OF SEPT 3 2021

**Q. Is Pregnancy a valid reason for a COVID-19 vaccine exemption or deferral?**

**A.** Pregnancy alone does not automatically qualify for an exemption. Service members may request a temporary medical exemption from COVID-19 vaccination from their Department of Defense (DoD) medical providers. Pregnant patients who have concerns about vaccination must have their concerns addressed by appropriate clinical consultation. If the provider determines that it is appropriate to defer vaccination until later in pregnancy or post-pregnancy, the provider issues a temporary medical exemption from vaccination. AS OF SEPT 9 2021

**Q. Will a deferral option to take the vaccine after having the baby be available?**

**A.** Breastfeeding is not a contraindication to the COVID-19 vaccine. It is recommended

that women continue to breastfeed their children after vaccination. COVID-19 antibodies can pass through breastmilk and protect breastfeeding children from the virus; which can occur for at least 6 weeks post-vaccination. None of the COVID-19 vaccines include live viruses that can be passed through the breast milk. AS OF SEPT 9 2021

**Q. If a Sailor received the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, will they still be required to get the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine?**

**A.** No. If they've received any of the FDA or World Health Organization EUA vaccines, they meet the mandatory COVID-19 vaccine requirement. Only the Pfizer vaccine is currently mandated. AS OF SEPT 3 2021

**Q. Will Service members be mandated to take the Pfizer vaccine or will the other shots (Moderna and J&J) still be an option?**

**A.** Other FDA approved COVID-19 vaccines, if available, are an option for the member, but only voluntarily. AS OF SEPT 3 2021

**Q. Are booster shots/3rd doses going to be mandated as well?**

**A.** Currently, only two doses are licensed for Pfizer. Further guidance on a booster dose is forthcoming. AS OF SEPT 3 2021

**Q. Will the vaccine be required if the Sailor already had COVID?**

**A.** Yes. Per the SECDEF memorandum/24AUG21, Mandatory Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination of Department of Defense Service Members, those with previous COVID-19 infection are not considered fully vaccinated. AS OF SEPT 3 2021

**Q. How will the HPCON guidance change after the force becomes immunized?**

**A.** Commanders still have the authority to change their location's HPCON guidance based on COVID-19 case counts. HPCON measures, and considerations in a fully vaccinated force, are currently being evaluated. AS OF 3 SEPTEMBER 2021

**Q. Will Sailors still need to wear masks if the vaccine is mandatory?**

**A.** Yes. The CDC still recommends individuals who are fully vaccinated to wear masks in indoor settings. AS OF SEPT 3 2021

**Q. Can local providers decline to submit a Service member's desire for a medical waiver if deemed not clinically indicated?**

**A.** Yes. If the medical provider evaluating the Service member deems the request for an exemption not clinically indicated, the work flow then leads towards vaccination. AS OF SEPT 3 2021

**Q. Can providers approve a temporary medical exemption at the local level?**

**A.** Yes, a temporary medical exemption may be granted at the local level in rare circumstances to allow the current situation prompting the temporary exemption to subside. AS OF SEPT 3 2021

**Q. May Service members (active or reserve) request a waiver for a religious accommodation?**

**A.** Per the Navy Chief of Chaplains (N097): The religious accommodation process for the COVID-19 vaccine is no different than any other vaccine service members may be directed to take. BUPERSINST 1730.11A, MILPERSMAN 1730-020, and MCO 1730.9

(for members of the USMC) cover the process for requesting a religious waiver to policy for immunizations. Above directives also clearly describe the responsibilities of the member, the interviewing chaplain, and the commander.

Even if approved, the waiver is not permanent. Commanding officers may, without prior approval, revoke a Service member's authorized immunization waiver in the event of imminent risk of disease due to exposure or as a result of international health regulations incident to foreign travel (per MILPERSMAN 1730-020). AS OF SEPT 3 2021

**Q. What is the likelihood of attaining an approval for a religious accommodation waiver?**

**A.** The Navy remains committed to the support of free exercise of religion to the greatest extent possible. DODI 1300.17 specifically states the position of the DOD: "In accordance with Section 533(a)(1) of Public Law 112-239, as amended, the DoD Components will accommodate individual expressions of sincerely held beliefs (conscience, moral principles, or religious beliefs) which do not have an adverse impact on military readiness, unit cohesion, good order and discipline, or health and safety." Accordingly, requests for religious accommodations will be individually evaluated. In all cases, commanders must endorse and forward the request to CNP (in the case of Navy personnel) per MILPERSMAN 1730-020 to ensure parity in application of the directives and track the overall health of the force. For applicants in the USMC MCO 1730.9 applies. AS OF SEPT 3 2021

**Q. Are waivers permanent?**

**A.** Not all waivers are permanent. Medical exemptions may be granted for a certain period of time such as when a service member is under treatment for a particular disease or condition. The decision must be for the best treatment of the Service member. Those discussions and request for waiver should originate between the Service member and their medical provider. In reference to waivers for religious accommodation, in the event that a waiver is approved, COs may, without prior approval, revoke a Service member's authorized immunization waiver in the event of imminent risk of disease due to exposure or as a result of international health regulations incident to foreign travel. AS OF SEPT 3 2021

**Q. Will family members living overseas on or off-base have different requirements or will they be sent back CONUS if they refuse vaccination?**

**A.** Family members living overseas on or off base are not required to be vaccinated at this time unless the host nation specifies otherwise. However, all family members should receive vaccines according to CDC recommendations for the specific country as stated in NAVMED1300/2 section b question 3.

Currently, the CDC recommends everyone 16 years of age and older to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 prior to travel.

Some countries may require COVID-19 vaccination to enter the country or access some facilities. If a country requires vaccination, it may impact entry or continued stay in that country. AS OF OCT 1 2021



**Q. What happens to Service members who refuse the vaccine without a waiver?**

**A.** Please refer to section 3.e.(5) of NAVADMIN 190/21. AS OF OCT 1 2021

**Q. Why do I need to see a Chaplain for an interview as part of a request for religious accommodation?**

**A.** Discussions with Chaplains (and RP's when in the performance of their duties as an RP) concerning matters of faith and conscience are considered privileged and confidential communication. Per SECNAVINST 1730.9A, "Unconstrained communication of acts of religion or matters of conscience in complete privacy encourages Service Members, their families, and other authorized personnel to seek assistance and disclose the nature of the issue, enhancing the scope and quality of care." This is also supported in the Manual for Courts-Martial, United States 2016 ed., M.R.E. 503. Every service member desiring to submit an application requesting a vaccine waiver to accommodate their religious practice to the chain of command must be interviewed by a Navy Chaplain. The DON relies on Chaplains as authorized religious ministry professionals representing various faith communities and qualified to advise commanders on matters of religious faith and conscience. Therefore, if a service member requests an interview with a Chaplain (either remotely or in person) in order to include the Chaplains' interview with a written request for a religious accommodation such interview is not considered privileged communication. SECNAVINST 1730.9A governs this disclosure. AS OF SEPT 3 2021

**Q. Does the practice of my religious faith prevent me from getting the vaccine?**

**A.** Service members are encouraged to seek the counsel and/or consult information regarding religious beliefs and practices of their faith community. The government has no position on a service members' personal matters of religion or conscience. Chaplains are available to help facilitate those confidential discussions. Due to operational commitments COs may, without prior approval, revoke a Service member's authorized immunization waiver in the event of imminent risk of disease due to exposure or as a result of international health regulations incident to foreign travel (MILPERSMAN 1730-020 and SECNAVINST 1730.11A). AS OF SEPT 3 2021

**Resources:**

**DoD** – <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/Spotlight/Coronavirus-DOD-Response/>

**HHS** – <https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus/explaining-operation-warp-speed/index.html>

**CDC** – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

**DHA** – [www.health.mil/COVIDVaccine](http://www.health.mil/COVIDVaccine)

**FDA COVID Vaccines** – <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-vaccines>

**CDC: 8 Things to Know about Vaccine Planning**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/8-things.html>

**CDC: Understanding How COVID-19 Vaccines Work**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/how-they-work.html>

**CDC: Ensuring the Safety of COVID-19 Vaccines in the United States**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety.html>

**CDC: Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>

**FDA: Emergency Use Authorization for Vaccines Explained**

<https://www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/vaccines/emergency-use-authorization-vaccines-explained>