

## COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

### Table of Contents

<b>General Information .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Masks .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>COVID-19 Response .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Occupancy Requirements.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Travel .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Vaccines.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Returning to the Workplace .....</b>	<b>9</b>

## General Information

### 1. Where can I obtain general information about coronavirus and what is being done?

The [USA.gov coronavirus website](#) has general information about the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the virus that causes COVID-19.

The [Safer Federal Workforce Task Force website](#) offers a comprehensive understanding of the Task Force focus areas, resources, and news.

The [DOE Website](#) has information about what DOE laboratories and sites are doing to support the COVID response efforts.

If you still have a question, you may contact the DOE COVID-19 Hotline at [COVID-19Inquiries@hq.doe.gov](mailto:COVID-19Inquiries@hq.doe.gov) or by calling 202-586-2683.

### 2. If the DOE COVID-19 Safety Plan and CDC guidance are inconsistent, which guidance should be followed?

The CDC guidance should be followed in cases of inconsistency. The [DOE COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#) is a living document that is continually reviewed and updated accordingly.

## Masks

### 1. Do I need to wear a mask at a DOE site/facility if I have been fully vaccinated?

On July 27, 2021, the CDC updated their Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People. In keeping with the new CDC guidelines and guidance from the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force, all Federal employees, onsite contractors, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, are to wear a mask inside of Federal buildings located in [areas of substantial or high community transmission](#). As of October 14, 2021, this includes the Washington, DC area. Federal employees, onsite contractors, and visitors who are not fully vaccinated also need to continue to physically distance consistent with CDC guidance.

People are considered fully vaccinated:

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines; or
- 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine

Individuals who voluntarily disclose that they are unvaccinated, or decline to provide vaccination information when voluntarily sought, are still required to wear a mask and maintain social distancing in keeping with public health guidance.

This change is related to mask wearing and social distancing only. Maximum telework and occupancy limits remain in effect.

**2. Do all personnel in a government vehicle need to wear a mask if all persons have been vaccinated?**

In [areas of substantial or high community transmission](#), including the Washington DC area, all personnel travelling in a government vehicle must wear face masks while in the vehicle. If some occupants are not vaccinated, then all passengers riding in a government vehicle must wear a mask.

**3. Do I have to remove my mask in areas where mask use is not required if I am fully vaccinated?**

You may continue to wear a mask at your discretion.

**4. Do I need to wear a mask while on official travel?**

Yes, that includes planes, buses and trains traveling into, within or outside of the U.S. as part of a federal mask mandate that was extended to September 13, 2021.

**5. How can I improve the efficacy of my mask?**

Check out more ways to improve your mask's efficacy at the CDC website, [Improve How Your Mask Protects You](#).

## COVID-19 Response

**1. What should I do if I have COVID-19-like symptoms or have been in close contact with someone who has or may have COVID-19?**

Please notify your supervisor and contact your site or the DOE COVID-19 Hotline at [COVID-19Inquiries@hq.doe.gov](mailto:COVID-19Inquiries@hq.doe.gov) or by calling 202-586-2683. Personnel should also refer to the latest CDC guidance at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus) for additional information.

**2. If I experience COVID-19 like symptoms after being fully vaccinated, do I need to isolate?**

The Department follows [CDC guidance](#). If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should contact your health care provider, get tested, and stay home and away from others. Also notify your supervisor and follow the instructions for your site.

**3. What will happen if someone who has been in the building is confirmed to have COVID-19?**

Personnel with COVID-19 like symptoms or with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 are asked to report their condition to their supervisor and their site or DOE COVID-19 Hotline. The site or DOE COVID-19 response team will work with the person and/or their supervisor to identify any work-related close contacts and will help identify which areas need to be cleaned and sanitized. In accordance with CDC guidelines, any individual who has been in close contact with the sick or confirmed individual will be asked to self-quarantine if they have not been vaccinated. If they have been fully vaccinated, they do not need to quarantine; however, they should still monitor for [symptoms of COVID-19](#) for 14 days following an exposure. Depending on when the sick or confirmed individual was last in the building, the workstation of the individual will be sanitized. Additional cleaning will be done on a case-by-case basis.

**4. The CDC recently updated their recommendations for cleaning. Are DOE sites and facilities following the updated guidance?**

Yes, DOE sites and facilities may follow the updated guidance regarding cleaning and disinfecting a facility. If a person who has been sick or tested positive for COVID-19 has been in a facility within the last 24 hours, the spaces occupied by that person should be cleaned and disinfected. If more than 24 hours has passed since the person has been in the space, cleaning without performing disinfection is sufficient. If more than 3 days have passed since the person was in the space, no additional cleaning or disinfection is necessary.

**5. Do fully vaccinated employees need to quarantine following an exposure or close contact with someone who has COVID-19?**

Fully vaccinated employees do not need to quarantine or be tested following an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, as long as the individual exposed has no symptoms. They should still monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days following an exposure. If they experience symptoms, they should isolate themselves from others, be clinically evaluated for COVID-19, including SARS-CoV-2 testing, if indicated, and inform their health care provider of their vaccination status at the time of presentation to care.

## **6. How are sites screening the workforce as they come to work?**

If Federal employees, contractors, or visitors are not feeling well, they are not to enter the Federal workplace. DOE sites and facilities have implemented screening processes requiring Federal and contractor employees working on site to complete screening for signs and symptoms and other exposure history factors. Visitors will also be asked to complete symptom screening and exposure history before entering a DOE facility. More information can be found in the [DOE COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#).

## **7. If an individual has recovered from a confirmed COVID-19 case, when can they come back to work in a DOE workspace?**

Individuals should contact their immediate supervisor to determine when they may return.

## **8. Will contact tracing continue?**

Please refer to “Contact Tracing” in the [DOE COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#).

## **9. What should I do to protect my family?**

The Department strongly encourages everyone to follow the guidance provided by the CDC for [protecting yourself and your family](#).

## **10. Who can I contact if I am suffering from stress, anxiety, or grief?**

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides counseling and other resources to help manage stress, anxiety, and grief. Please contact your site’s EAP program. All DOE Federal employees may contact Espyr at (877) 801-5752 to speak to a counselor. Headquarters Federal employees may also contact the Headquarters EAP Specialist at (202) 586-4995 during business hours. For additional resources, Federal employees may visit the [Espyr](#) website. DOE’s password to the site and additional resources can be found on the [internal EAP page](#).

## **Occupancy Requirements**

The DOE approach to assessing and meeting building occupancy requirements utilizes the following definition to determine high community prevalence or transmission *“High Community prevalence or transmission is defined as a disease incidence case rate greater than 100 new cases per 100,000 population in the past two weeks using a 7-day rolling average for each day or greater than 200 new cases per 100,000 population in two weeks using a 7-day rolling average for each day in communities surrounding sites that have demonstrated adequate COVID-19 mitigation controls.”*

### **1. Where did the incidence rate of 100 new cases per 100,000 population come from?**

This is one of the [CDC definitions](#) of “high transmission” for a county.

## **2. Does “demonstrated adequate COVID-19 mitigation controls” apply to the site or to the communities surrounding the site?**

In this context, mitigative controls refers to control measures implemented at the site, not necessarily the community. Sites that have implemented adequate mitigative controls (mask usage, distancing, cleaning and disinfection, ventilation, etc.) may be able to more effectively manage a higher community incidence rate.

## **3. What does “demonstrated adequate COVID-19 mitigation controls” mean?**

Sites must follow guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), [Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\)](#), and the local public health department to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Control measures should be based on a thorough hazard assessment. The CDC guidance recommends measures such as social distancing, barriers, masks, and other controls. The OSHA guidance is consistent with the CDC guidance and in line with the principles of the hierarchy of controls. OSHA recommends a combination of measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. The site must be able to show that they have put engineering and administrative controls into place to minimize the transmission of COVID-19.

## **4. Can a site still obtain an exception to the occupancy requirement?**

Yes, a site may still obtain an exception to the occupancy requirement. The site should submit the exception request through their management chain.

## Travel

### **1. What travel guidelines should be followed?**

Federal and contractor employees should adhere strictly to CDC, state, and local guidelines before, during, and after travel, regardless of whether the travel is personal or for official business. More information on this topic may be found in the [DOE COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#).

### **2. Do I need to be vaccinated before being approved for official domestic or international travel?**

DOE follows [vaccination requirements](#) that are applicable across the Federal government. Official domestic travel is limited to mission-critical trips and requires authorization from Heads of departmental elements. International travel should also be avoided, if at all possible, unless it is mission critical (e.g., military deployments, COVID-19 response deployments or activities, diplomats traveling, high-level international negotiations that cannot occur remotely). The CDC has published guidance for travel for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals. DOE is following CDC guidance for domestic and international travel and expects that individual travelers will

follow the travel restrictions appropriate to their situation. For example, per CDC's current guidance, if the traveler is fully vaccinated (2 weeks after the first shot of a one-shot regime or the second shot of a two-shot regime) then post-travel quarantine is not required; if not fully vaccinated, then quarantine or testing, as applicable, may be required. Where you travel matters. If you travel to a high transmission area, you are also at greater risk for getting COVID-19 and transmitting it to others. Check out the CDC's travel recommendations by destination.

### **3. Do I need to wear a mask while on official travel?**

Yes, that includes planes, buses and trains traveling into, within or outside of the U.S. as part of a federal mask mandate that was extended to September 13, 2021.

### **4. Can I receive temporary duty (TDY) allowance if I self-quarantine at home after official travel?**

No, except in limited emergency circumstances involving employees who serve in a law enforcement, investigative, or similar capacity. In those cases, the head of the agency may approve appropriate subsistence payments for the employee or members of the employee's family (or both) while occupying temporary living accommodations at or away from the employee's designated post of duty. Such situations will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

## Vaccines

### **1. As a DOE federal employee, am I required by DOE to get vaccinated?**

Pursuant to Executive Orders 14043 and Federal guidance, COVID-19 vaccination is now required for DOE Federal employees. Consistent with current Federal guidance, DOE requires Federal employees to be fully vaccinated by November 22, 2021. This applies to all Federal employees regardless of remote, telework, or onsite reporting status, except in limited circumstances in which an employee may be exempt due to a legally required [accommodation](#).

Employees will be considered [fully vaccinated](#) for COVID-19 two weeks after they have received the requisite number of doses of a COVID-19 vaccine approved or authorized for emergency use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration or that has been listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization. For Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, or AstraZeneca/Oxford, that is 2 weeks after an employee has received the second dose in a 2-dose series. For Johnson and Johnson (J&J)/Janssen, that is 2 weeks after an employee has received a single-dose. The timing between the first and second shots [depends on which vaccine is received](#). See <https://www.saferfederalworkforce.gov/faq/vaccinations/> for more information.

## **2. May employees return to work if they have been fully vaccinated?**

The Department remains on a maximum telework status. Vaccinated Federal and contractor employees may not return to work unless there is a mission critical reason for being on-site. Vaccinated Federal and contractor employees may not always be required to wear a mask or maintain social distance, consistent with CDC and state or local guidance, but they are expected to continue to wash their hands frequently (or use a hand sanitizer) when in a DOE building or on DOE property. If I experience COVID-19 like symptoms after being fully vaccinated, do I need to isolate?

The Department follows [CDC guidance](#). If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should contact your health care provider, get [tested](#), and [stay home](#) and away from others. Also notify your supervisor and follow the instructions for your site.

## **3. If I am fully vaccinated, do I need to quarantine following an exposure or close contact with someone who has COVID-19?**

Fully vaccinated employees do not need to [quarantine](#) or be tested following an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, as long as they have no symptoms. They should still monitor for [symptoms of COVID-19](#) for 14 days following an exposure. If they experience symptoms, they should isolate themselves from others, be clinically evaluated for COVID-19, including SARS-CoV-2 testing, if indicated, and inform their health care provider of their vaccination status at the time of presentation to care.

## **4. Should I get a vaccine for COVID-19 if one is offered?**

Yes, you are strongly encouraged to get an FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccine once it is available. Even if you have had COVID-19 in the past, [the CDC still recommends getting the vaccine](#).

## **5. Are employees granted administrative leave for the COVID-19 vaccine?**

The guidance has changed for administrative leave for vaccinations for a Federal employee: When a Federal employee is required to be vaccinated, the time the employee spends obtaining any COVID-19 vaccination (including travel time) is regular duty time. Administrative leave no longer applies.

## **6. Are employees granted administrative leave to accompany family members to get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Family members of an employee are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated, and Federal employees may receive up to four hours of administrative leave (per dose, including boosters) to accompany a [family member](#) receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. This administrative leave is in addition to the administrative leave DOE currently authorizes for Federal employees if they experience any side effects (up to two workdays per dose including boosters).



## **7. If I have an adverse reaction to a vaccine, where should I report it?**

Most people do not have serious problems after being vaccinated. Your arm may be sore, red, or warm to the touch at the injection site. These symptoms usually go away on their own within a week. Some people report getting a headache or fever when getting a vaccine. These side effects are a sign that your immune system is doing exactly what it is supposed to do. It is working and building up protection to the disease. FDA and CDC are continuing to monitor the safety of the vaccine and ask you to report any side effects. If you do have an adverse reaction, you should contact your health care provider and then report the side effects using the [V-safe application](#) which can be downloaded to your phone. You will need a smartphone and information about the COVID-19 vaccine you received. If you do not have a cell phone, you can register any effects in the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System \(VAERS\)](#). This information will also be provided on the CDC COVID-19 Vaccine Record Card which you will receive at the time you receive your first dose.

Federal employees are authorized to take up to two days of administrative leave per dose, including booster doses, for side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine.

## **Returning to the Workplace**

### **1. I want to return to my physical workplace as soon as I can. When can I expect to do so?**

Personnel will be given advance notice and guidance for when they may return to work in accordance with Federal guidance and site-specific procedures, contracts, and local conditions. Personnel are encouraged to consult with their supervisor for information related to their specific workplaces.

### **2. Is DOE still using a phased approach for returning to the workplace (i.e., Phase 1, 2, 3)?**

The Department now follows the [Department of Energy COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#) issued on May 18, 2021, which supersedes DOE's COVID-19 Return to the Federal Workplace Framework. Although sites can still use phase terminology as needed in describing their postures, the COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan requires cognizant Departmental Elements and sites to review the mission critical work being performed in-person or on-site, refine their plans, and minimize, where necessary, on-site work. This plan continues to maximize telework to protect the health and safety of the workforce.