

The following COVID-19 vaccination-related questions were posted on February 15, 2021. Questions from the Vaccine Town Hall are available further down in this document.

1: Who or what decides who can get vaccinated when? Is it UConn?

The governor and the state of Connecticut’s Department of Public Health is designing and administering the state’s vaccination plan, including when different categories of those who live and work in Connecticut can be vaccinated and in what order. [Here is the state’s website.](#) UConn does not have its own vaccination plan; it is implementing the state’s plan according to the state’s rules and guidelines.

The state has provided the following guidance regarding when citizens are eligible to get vaccinated. The following table outlines UConn’s ongoing vaccination efforts and anticipated prioritization of Phase 1b while additional guidelines emerge at the state level. All timelines remain subject to change, dependent on vaccine availability and additional federal and state guidance.

Phases/Tiers	Timeline*	Impacted Groups
Phase 1a	On-going	First Responders, Healthcare Workers
Phase 1b (Tier 1)	On-going	Individuals Aged 75 and Over
Phase 1b (Tier 2)	On-going	Individuals Aged 65-74
Phase 1b (Tier 3) –	Likely March to mid-summer	Individuals w/ Eligible Health Conditions to be defined by the State of Connecticut
Phase 1b (Tier 3) –	Likely March to mid-summer	“Frontline Essential Workers” which include employees on the Spring Registry, Graduate Assistants working on campus, and student teachers/certain affiliates, including new hires in these categories.
Phase 1b (Tier 3) –	Likely March through year end	“Front Line Essential Workers” which include employees working on campus after the Spring semester, including those expected to be on campus in the summer and fall who maybe telecommuting currently or hired later in the year.
Later Phases	Anticipated to start mid-to late summer	Anticipated: All other employees, including telecommuting employees.

*Timelines above are extremely rough estimates based on existing information, subject to change based on a variety of factors outside of our control. We will update tiers and estimates as new information is received from the State.

2: I am a UConn employee – am I required to be vaccinated by UConn?

No. If an eligible employee has an opportunity or a desire to be vaccinated through some other entity, they are free to do so. Indeed, as new vaccine providers open throughout the state, and because vaccine allocations to UConn Health and other providers vary from week to week, we encourage employees to secure vaccine appointments wherever they are able to, [as soon as they are eligible.](#)

3: Will UConn create its own system of prioritization outside of the state’s? Can I be prioritized for any reason?

No. UConn will follow the state’s guidelines and each category is first-come, first-serve.

4: How will I know if I'm able to be vaccinated by UConn?

UConn's Office of Human Resources will send you an invitation via email.

5: I heard there was some kind of wait list. Is there? Why?

Yes. The university's goal is to ensure that not a single dose is wasted. If, for example, we have 100 doses and by the end of the day only 98 people have been vaccinated and the remaining two doses will expire shortly – meaning returning them to the state is not an option – the Office of Human Resources will endeavor to call eligible individuals on the wait list to see if they can come to our site immediately to be vaccinated. [Employees can sign up for the waitlist by clicking the button on the right side of the HR vaccination page.](#)

6: Who at UConn has been vaccinated?

Whether someone chooses to get a COVID-19 vaccine is voluntary, and if they do choose to get vaccinated, that information is part of the individual's medical record. Because COVID-19 vaccinations are not required by UConn, UConn as an employer does not have the right to see the medical records or know who specifically has decided to get the vaccine. We can share the number of UConn employees who have been invited to be vaccinated as they become eligible under the state's vaccine program, and the total number of doses that have been administered at the Hawley Armory to those who have chosen to be vaccinated there. Please note that eligible individuals may have also chosen to receive their vaccines at other locations throughout the state.

As of February 8:

of employees invited to be vaccinated: 2,176

of first doses: 877

of second doses: 199

7: How many of the above faculty/staff are not patient or student facing?

UConn invited only those individuals who were eligible for the vaccine as dictated by the state's guidelines. Phase 1a includes First Responders and Healthcare Workers, Phase 1b (Tier 1) are all individuals aged 75 and older, whether or not they are first responders or student facing.

8: But I heard that some students got vaccinated – how is that possible?

UConn students who have clinical placements as part of their academic work are considered patient-facing and are being invited to be vaccinated. These students are working in the state's hospitals and other clinical settings.

9: I know someone who works at UConn who doesn't fit into any of the eligible categories, but was able to get vaccinated at UConn anyway. Why is that?

If the employee is at UConn Health and is not patient-facing, note that the state's initial guidance was that any employee working for a healthcare employer could be vaccinated. This was later changed to patient-facing healthcare workers only. Some non-patient-facing UConn Health employees were invited

to be vaccinated before the guidance changed. In other cases, UConn has learned that – like other vaccine locations throughout the state and the nation – some who are not currently eligible to receive the vaccine have been able to get it at our sites. UConn has learned that some individuals were able to get into the UConn Health scheduling system to schedule a vaccination for themselves or a family member before they were eligible. The UConn Health system has been modified to prevent this from occurring in the future.

10: I heard that some dining hall and residential life workers in Storrs got invitations to be vaccinated. How is that possible?

Interpreting the state’s guidelines, the university initially included approximately 70 dining hall workers and residential life staff who have potential or direct exposure with COVID positive students in category 1a. However, the state Department of Public Health did not support that interpretation and further invitations to employees in this category were halted. UConn will consult with DPH should any question or ambiguity arise regarding who fits into which category.

11: I heard that UConn Health had to cancel and then reschedule a number of vaccination appointments. Why?

In Connecticut, like the rest of the nation, the demand for vaccine is extremely high and supply is limited. Healthcare providers, including UConn Health, are required to request weekly the number of doses they need from the state to meet their need for the following week, but they are not always provided all the requested doses. The number that are actually received depends on the state’s supply, which has been highly variable in recent weeks. UConn seeks to secure and administer as many doses as it possibly can, but that remains dependent on supply.

12: I read that UConn ordered 10,000 doses back in December but not nearly that many people have been vaccinated by UConn. Why?

UConn or UConn Health did not “order” 10,000 doses but UConn did answer requests from the State of Connecticut on how many employees would be eligible to be vaccinated. As a result, the Office of Human Resources estimated how many would be needed to vaccinate the UConn eligible population (20,000 doses – first and second).

There has never been a promise or guarantee that UConn would receive any specific number of doses. As explained above, the state is phasing in vaccines based on priority populations that it has established; it provides doses to UConn Health and other vaccine providers throughout the state based on the weekly demand at each location (including UConn’s site), in line with the current eligibility phase.

13: If supply increases, does UConn have the ability to ramp-up its vaccination program to vaccinate more people faster?

Yes, and it will do so.

The following COVID-19 vaccination-related questions were posted on February 5, 2021.

Vaccine Town Hall Questions

1. Are employees allowed to receive the vaccine at another provider?

Yes. Employees may choose to receive the vaccine from another provider, but it's important for employees to remember that they must receive both doses from the same provider. In other words, employees cannot receive the first dose from their private physician and the second dose from UConn Health. The University hopes a majority of employees select UConn Health as their source for the COVID-19 vaccine.

2. Are any employee's dependents eligible to receive the vaccine?

At this time, the University is only able to offer the vaccine to employees.

3. Could you provide a general overview of the actual Moderna vaccine and its effectiveness?

The Moderna vaccine is an mRNA vaccine, which is a newer vaccine technology, and it has shown great effectiveness and safety. The vaccine stimulates the body's natural immune response to prevent future infection. There is no live virus as part of this vaccine, so employees cannot become infected with COVID-19 from the vaccine.

Data on efficacy has shown the vaccine to be 95% effective in preventing symptomatic or severely symptomatic COVID-19.

4. Should employees expect or anticipate any side-effects?

UConn Health has seen limited side effects in the individuals who have been vaccinated. Of those who do show side effects, it is most often a low-grade fever.

5. If I feel ill on the day of my vaccine appointment - either the first or second dose - should I reschedule?

Yes – for both a testing or vaccine appointment, employees should refrain from attending their appointment if they feel unwell and should address the symptoms appropriately.

6. How can I learn what's in the vaccine to determine if I have an allergy?

Employees can find the components of the vaccine on page 2 of this [FDA fact sheet](#).

7. How many employees does the University intend to vaccinate each week? And will the University increase the number of days it administers vaccines?

At this time, the University intends to offer vaccinations twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and the University estimates that we will be able to vaccinate 200 people per day for a total of 400 per week. The University intends to increase to three vaccination days a week (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday) in the near future, increasing the weekly vaccination numbers to 600 per week.

8. Is the University taking advantage of available nursing and pharmacy students to assist with administering vaccines?

Yes, the University has engaged the Schools of Nursing and Pharmacy to identify faculty and students who may be able to assist in the vaccination process. While School of Pharmacy personnel are assisting in Storrs, Farmington, and at other facilities across CT, School of Nursing personnel are only assisting in Farmington at this time. The University intends to seek additional assistance of Nursing and Pharmacy students and faculty in Storrs in the near future.

9. Does Phase 1b include all professors and instructors (Tenured, Tenure-Track and non-tenure track) in addition to all GAs? Are those of us who are teaching online now because of the pandemic considered part of category 1b?

Yes, but the University must follow the State of CT Department of Public Health vaccination phase eligibility, and will also be relying on the On-Campus Registry and other factors, as outlined by DPH, to prioritize employee vaccinations.

10. Where is HR acquiring the names of employees in each phase? Can employees add themselves to Phase 1b?

HR uses both the On-Campus Registry, which was populated by organizational heads, and a master-roster of all employees. The State of CT defines the phases that individuals are eligible to receive the vaccine. Please see the Connecticut COVID-19 Vaccine Website for additional information <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/covid-19%20vaccinations>

11. Are emeritus faculty, including those on gratis appointments, eligible for the vaccine through UConn?

Active emeritus faculty are eligible for the vaccine through UConn. In other words, if the University has an active record for an emeritus faculty member, including a gratis record, they are eligible.

12. Are graduate assistants only eligible under the employee vaccination program if they're working on campus in relation to the GA role? In other words, would GAs who only come to campus to attend class be eligible for the vaccine?

Graduate Assistants who are only coming to campus to attend class are classified as students for the purposes of the employee vaccine program.

13. If we already have a MyChart account under our personal email address should we sign up for another one under our UConn email address? Or should we ask for our UConn email address to be added to our personal MyChart account?

Employees may use their personal email address when signing up for MyChart. UConn Health encourages employees to download the MyChart app on their mobile devices.

14. If I don't have a Social Security number, am I still able to register with MyChart?

Yes, the social security field is not required. Employees in this circumstance could use 0000 when MyChart requests a SSN.

15. Will UConn release the names of Phase 1b employees to local pharmacies so that employees may acquire the vaccine?

No.

16. If I've been vaccinated, should I continue to be tested if I'm invited to surveillance testing or experience a potential exposure?

Yes, employees should continue to undergo testing and quarantine (as appropriate), as the vaccine does not currently impact other strategies for mitigating the virus.

17. If I've been vaccinated, do I still need to wear a mask on campus and at work?

Yes. All on-campus protocols, including wearing a mask, hand washing, and social distancing remain in place until further notice from the University and/or the Department of Public Health.

18. If I've been vaccinated, do I still need to adhere to the state and University's travel guidance, including quarantining or receiving a COVID test upon return?

Yes – the state and University's travel guidance remains in place until further notice for all employees, regardless of vaccination status.

19. Could someone explain what it means if a vaccine has received "provisional" approval? According to some of the journalists who specialize in medical topics, one reason given by some for having vaccine hesitancy is because the vaccine has "provisional" approval. Is that true and, if so, what difference does provisional approval make? Since some of those refusing vaccines work in healthcare, I think it would be helpful to explain why they might see this type of approval as an obstacle.

The vaccines have been reviewed by the FDA and approved under and "Emergency Use Authorization (EUA)." This allows the FDA to "allow unapproved medical products or unapproved uses of approved medical products to be used in an emergency to diagnose, treat, or prevent serious or life-threatening diseases or conditions...when there are no adequate, approved, and available alternatives." There may be somewhat less data available to evaluate compared to a traditional "full" submission for FDA-approval, but the balance of information must support a scientifically-rigorous assessment that the benefits of the therapy (or vaccine) strongly outweigh the risks. In the case of the vaccines, large studies were completed, and the EUA was granted once enough data on effectiveness and safety were generated. These studies will continue for ~2 years for additional assessment of long-term effectiveness and safety, which will help us to determine things like whether a booster dose may be needed (and, if so, when).

20. Will faculty still have the opportunity to teach remotely in the fall, if desired?

At this time, the answer varies based on how vaccine roll-out occurs and infection rates drop. If this occurs, the University intends to move towards more in-person meetings. However, the University will continue to prioritize safety and pivot back to distance learning, if necessary. The University is also launching a Committee led by the Provost's Office to determine the long-term plans for delivering teaching at UConn.

21. If I'm eligible for the vaccine in Phase 1b, will I be able to decline the vaccine invitation and then seek the vaccine at any time in Phase 2 or beyond?

As we do not have an estimate for the duration of the vaccine program, we encourage everyone who wants to be vaccinated to schedule their appointment when they are eligible and receive an invitation from HR.

22. Is there a schedule for when the vaccine will be available at Avery Point and Stamford?

The University is actively reviewing potential dates for on-campus clinics at Avery Point and Stamford. As of now, detailed information is not available.

23. When will faculty and student-facing staff be notified about their status with regards to Cohort 1b?

Employees will receive a direct communication from HR once employees become eligible to schedule a vaccine appointment. The University is awaiting guidance from DPH on when the next phases of the vaccine roll-out will occur. Employees will not receive a prior email detailing their specific Phase.

24. If an employee works rotationally on campus and has an underlying health condition, such as asthma, would they be moved to Phase 1b?

Employees between the ages of 16 and 64 with comorbidities are included in Phase 1b, according to DPH. A list of applicable comorbidities is not yet available.

25. Will high-risk employees be encouraged to seek the vaccine through their primary care providers or the regional health district?

Employees have the discretion to seek the vaccine where they choose.

26. If I decline getting the vaccine and am then infected with COVID, will the University place me on paid leave?

If an employee is eligible for the state's 14-day COVID leave, employees would be able to use that leave. If that leave is not available to you or you have used that leave, HR will assess leave on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate, including the use of sick time.

27. What kind of monitoring will be performed after the injection, and what precautions will be taken in case someone has an allergic reaction?

After receiving the vaccine, a nurse at Hawley Armory will monitor socially-distanced employees to observe for any immediate side effects or allergic reactions. Employees who previously had a reaction to a vaccination should inform staff on-site before receiving the vaccine, and those employees will be observed for a longer period of time.

28. Will staff providing vaccines have the necessary protocols in place to handle allergic reactions including anaphylaxis?

Yes. The University has the appropriate emergency medications on site, and – if necessary – will call for emergency services.

29. Do I need to sign a waiver or declination if I choose not to receive the vaccine?

No.

30. Will UConn inventory doses to ensure employees receive both doses at the appropriate intervals?

Yes, UConn Health will manage their doses to ensure recipients receive their 2nd dose at the correct interval.

31. And how much vaccine does the University have on hand, and is it enough for all of Phase 1b?

UConn Health receives a weekly shipment of vaccine, and UConn Health uses its scheduling system, EPIC, to plan several weeks out to ensure that we receive the appropriate amount of vaccine each week.

32. Is there a list of comorbidities for employees to review?

The DPH has put out some comorbidities that they are evaluating, but we are awaiting a final decision on what constitutes a recognized comorbidity.

33. If an employee lives with a high-risk individual, would the employee be moved up in the vaccine schedule, if they otherwise did not qualify for that Phase?

The University is following guidance from DPH and the governor and this scenario has not yet been included in any guidance.

34. Is there a waitlist for the end of the day to offer vaccines to individuals, in case another individual misses a scheduled appointment or there is extra vaccine left?

Yes. Employees can sign up for the waitlist at <https://hr.uconn.edu/vaccine-wait-list-form/> UConn will be following the Department of Public Health Wastage Policy guidelines in administering the waitlist.

35. Why isn't the University vaccinating individuals 24/7?

The University only has one on-campus site on the Storrs campus at this time, but is exploring for additional sites, as needed and dependent on vaccine availability.

36. Did the University choose to use Moderna, or is that what was available and provided by the state?

It's a bit of both, because most long-term facilities had contracted with the Pfizer vaccine, so that state's supply went to that initiative. UConn Health received a higher proportion of the Moderna vaccine. For UConn and UConn Health's need to move the vaccine from Farmington to Storrs and other locations, the Moderna vaccine is a better choice as it is stable at room temperature.

37. How should colleagues in the same department spread out their appointments to ensure they don't experience side effects simultaneously?

We have asked employees to speak to their peers to stagger their appointments, as possible. However, UConn Health has seen very few reactions to the vaccine.

38. If I suffer side effects after receiving the vaccine and must call out sick from work, can I use COVID Paid Sick Leave for my absence?

No, Paid COVID Paid Sick Leave is not to be used for vaccination side effects. The employee will have to use sick time.

39. If I need to cancel or reschedule my 1st or 2nd dose of the vaccine, how do I do it?

To reschedule, you need to call the UConn Health COVID Vaccine line at 860-679-5589 or 860-679-8888. You can cancel an appointment in your MyChart or call the vaccine line.