

Dane County COVID-19 Vaccine or Testing Requirement – Questions and Answers

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Q1: What is a PCR Test?

A1: A polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test is performed to detect genetic material from a specific organism, such as a virus. A PCR test detects the presence of a virus if you are infected at the time of the test. A PCR test is distinct from an antigen test. PCR tests typically involve either a nasal swab or saliva. PCR tests are sometimes referred to as a “molecular” test. The Mayo Clinic has some additional information about the different kinds of testing at the following link: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/covid-19-diagnostic-test/about/pac-20488900>

Q2: I have decided to get vaccinated, do I need to continue to get a PCR test while waiting to become fully vaccinated?

A2: No. Once employees have received one shot, they may report this to their supervisor with appropriate documentation. If the supervisor receives supporting documentation from the employee, then the employee is no longer required to obtain a COVID test.

Q3: Are rapid antigen tests permitted? Are at home COVID tests permitted?

A3: Rapid antigen tests are not permitted. Staff who submit proof of a rapid antigen tests have not complied with the testing requirement.

There are at-home PCR tests and these are permissible. For example, the at-home tests from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services are PCR tests and permissible. Please see:

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/collection.htm>.

Employees who use an at home PCR test must still comply with the reporting deadline. The Department of Administration is not sure if at-home PCR tests allow for sufficient time in processing in order to comply with the once per week requirement. At this time, we are encouraging employees who need testing to seek an in person test.

Q4: Where can I get a PCR Test?

A4: There are many locations and employees are free to pick any one that works for them.

Public Health has a testing location at the Village on Park.

Additionally, Pharmacies listed on Public Health’s website (<https://publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus/testing>) are providing free PCR tests. These locations operate under a contract with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to provide free COVID testing. A condition of that contract is that the pharmacies are prohibited from asking whether the individual has insurance and are prohibited from charging insurance for these services. Instead, these pharmacies receive a reimbursement for COVID testing directly from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

Also the Wisconsin Department of Health Services has a broader list of pharmacies for locations outside of the county here: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/community-testing.htm>.

DO NOT USE Health care to obtain a weekly PCR Test. Health care will only support medically necessary COVID tests (if an employee and individuals on their health plan have symptoms or are exposed to other individuals with COVID-19).

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Q5: Is there a cost to getting a PCR test?

A5: No. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act requires COVID-19 testing to be free. So employees should not have any costs related to receiving a COVID-19 test.

Q6: Will Dane County have an employer sponsored testing operation?

A6: The Department of Administration is exploring options regarding an employer testing location. If it becomes necessary, the County may arrange for a contractor to provide testing. At the start of this policy, employees who need to obtain a weekly test will need to arrange for their own testing.

Q7: Is leave available to obtain a COVID test? Is work time available to obtain a COVID test?

A7: Yes. A reasonable amount of time while working may be used to obtain a test. Appropriate leave time (COVID-19 Emergency Leave – but not Supplemental COVID-19 Emergency Leave, Sick Time, Vacation, etc.) and an employee's own time can be used to obtain a COVID-19 test. As with all attendance issues, staff must keep their supervisors informed of a planned absence. If using work time, please coordinate this with your manager/supervisor prior to obtaining a test.

Q8: If work time is used, can employees receive a mileage reimbursement for a COVID test?

A8: Yes. However, requests for mileage must comply with the rules established by Dane County Ordinance.

Q9: If work time is used, can my manager/supervisor direct or limit where we take a test?

A9: Employees are free to obtain a test at any location that works best for them. Employees using work time to obtain a test should select a reasonable location and work with their supervisor to determine an appropriate time to take a test prior to leaving work to obtain a test.

Q10: If work time is used, can my manager/supervisor develop a schedule or direct when employees can take a test?

A10: Yes. If work time is used, managers can direct when employees can take a test in order to provide coverage to their operations.

Q11: If I work remotely or work from home 100%, do I need to obtain a COVID test if I haven't received the vaccine?

A11: Yes. All employees are expected to come into the office whenever their department determines that circumstances warrant it (i.e. an emergency, business needs, the unavailability of internet at the home, etc.). Therefore, the requirement applies to all staff, even those who are working from home remotely.

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Q12: If I'm out on vacation, do I need to provide a test for the week that I'm out?

A12: No. When employees are on vacation, they do not need to get a test. When an employee comes back from vacation, supervisors should work with the employee to see that the employee can get a test as soon as practical.

Q13: How soon can the results from a PCR test be provided?

A13: The policy requires that test results must be reported by Monday at noon. The policy requires that unvaccinated employees are tested once per week. As long as employees get a test and report before Monday at noon, they are in compliance with the policy. Typically it takes 24 to 48 hours to process a test. So an employee could get tested on Thursday or Friday and provide the results on Monday.

Q14: If the test is positive, is work from home available?

A14: If you test positive, your first concern should be getting proper medical care and following your health care provider's advice. If a health care provider requires an employee to quarantine, then the employee should check with their supervisor regarding work from home. Not all positions in the County currently allow work from home. If an employee is required to quarantine and remote work is not available, then employees should use COVID-19 Emergency Leave, COVID-19 Supplemental Leave, Sick Time, Vacation, or another form of leave.

Additionally, employees who test positive should notify their supervisor so that the County can follow the exposure and notification policy.

Q15: What happens if I don't receive my test results before the Monday at noon deadline?

A15: The burden is on employees to provide test results in a timely manner. Employees who do not comply with the policy may be subject to progressive discipline. The specific discipline will likely depend on the particular circumstance.

Q16: How long does it take for test results to be made available?

A 16: Typically 24 to 48 hours. Some locations may process tests faster. Please use this information to obtain a test with an appropriate amount of time.

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Q17: Why isn't everyone being required to submit a test?

A17: The best tool that we have against preventing severe illness from COVID is the COVID-19 vaccine.

While breakthrough infections can occur, they are still rare. When breakthrough infections occur, the cases are not as severe as the cases of those who are unvaccinated. See here for more information:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/severe-breakthrough-infections-remain-very-rare-despite-rising-concerns>

Individuals who are vaccinated do not need a weekly PCR test at this point because they have already taken the step to get the vaccine – which lowers their possibility of getting infected and if they do develop an infection, it is not a severe outcome.

Q18: If you can't get the vaccine due to a medical issue, how do you report that?

A18: This policy requires employees to be vaccinated or to seek a weekly PCR test. The policy does not focus on the reasons a particular employee is not vaccinated. Since the requirement is to be vaccinated or submit a weekly PCR test, individuals who cannot get vaccinated for any reason must meet the requirement to submit a weekly PCR test.

If an employee did receive one vaccination and had an adverse reaction, the employee is not required to submit to a week PCR test. Please see Question #31.

Q19: Are accommodations to not obtaining a PCR test allowed?

A19: Yes. If you have a disability or a religious objection to a PCR test, please contact Employee Relations to begin the process of requesting an accommodation.

Q20: What motivated this policy?

A20: Concerns about the spread of the Delta variant have motivated the development of this policy. To read more about the Delta variant, please see this information on the CDC's website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/delta-variant.html>

Q21: Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?

A21: The CDC considers the COVID-19 vaccines safe. To read more about their research, visit their website here:

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

Q22: Can I see the product information for the COVID-19 vaccines?

A22: Product information on all of the vaccines approved for use in the United States are on the CDC's website here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/index.html>

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Q23: Are the vaccines effective?

A23: Yes. Extensive information about the effectiveness of the vaccines is also available on the CDC's website: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/effectiveness-research/protocols.html>

Q24: I am vaccinated, but currently on vacation. Can I submit the information after the 8/20/21 deadline?

A24: Yes. Please complete the Vaccine Status report when you return from your vacation.

Q25: Does this requirement apply to contractors working for Dane County?

A25: It does not. Dane County is hoping that other employers will follow our example and ask their employees to follow a similar policy.

Q26: Does this requirement apply to paid interns? What about unpaid interns and volunteers?

A26: The policy applies to all paid employees, including paid interns. We do not have a system to collect information for unpaid interns and volunteers at this time.

Q27: If an employee doesn't submit a test result by the deadline, does this mean that the employee is barred from working?

A27: No, but the employee will be subject to progressive discipline.

Q28: What does it mean that an email of the result of the PCR test is not appropriate?

A28: The employee cannot just write or call their supervisor with the results of the test, "I receive the test and it is negative." Employees must provide documentation of the test result – the email from the entity running the test, a screen shot of the test result, a pdf document, etc.

Q29: Do individuals who have previously had COVID still need to obtain the vaccine or get tested?

A29: Yes. The requirement is to be vaccinated or submit a weekly PCR test. If an individual previously had COVID but is not vaccinated, that individual must meet the requirement to submit a weekly PCR test.

Q30: Is pregnancy considered a medical exemption?

A30: The CDC recently announced that the COVID vaccine is safe for individuals who are pregnant: <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s0811-vaccine-safe-pregnant.html>

That said, each individual is different. So an employee who is pregnant can still request a medical exemption.

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Q31: I received the first dose and had an adverse reaction. My doctor does not recommend receiving a second dose. How does this policy apply to me?

A31: The Department of Administration is considering individuals who received one shot and had an adverse reaction to have fulfilled the vaccination requirement of this policy. If this situation applies to you, please reach out to Employee Relations on how to document your situation.

Q32: What about false positives as a result from COVID testing?

A32: If you test positive, your first concern should be getting proper medical care and following your health care provider's advice.

Employees are reminded that a COVID test can detect a COVID infection before an employee presents symptoms and asymptomatic COVID is possible. That said, if an employee finds out later that the test was a false-positive, then, the employee should follow the health care provider's advice and Dane County's leave of absence policies.

Q33: Will Dane County's Health Insurance provide coverage if I experience an adverse effect from the vaccine?

A33: The terms and conditions of your County health insurance have not changed. Any deductibles, copays, premiums, etc. still apply. For specific questions about coverage, please contact Dean Customer Service (800) 279-1301. Additional information about the County's health insurance plan is available at the following website: <https://admin.countyofdane.com/employee-relations/active-employee>

Q34: Will Dane County's Life Insurance provide coverage if I die from receiving the vaccine?

A34: The terms and conditions of the County's Term Life Insurance have not changed. For more information about the County's Life Insurance, please see: <https://admin.countyofdane.com/documents/emprel/pdf/Life-insurance-information-8-4-21.pdf>

Q35: Will Worker's Compensation provide benefits if I were to have an adverse reaction to the COVID vaccine or testing?

A35: Worker's Compensation does provide benefits to employees who are injured at work or become ill due to a work-related activities. If you have an adverse reaction to the COVID vaccine or testing, please call our paperless WC intake system at 888-515-1563.

Q36: If I become disabled from the COVID vaccine, is this covered under disability insurance?

A36: The terms and conditions of the disability insurances plans with The Standard have not changed. For more information about those plans, please see: <https://admin.countyofdane.com/employee-relations/active-employee>

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Q37: Will Dane County pay for overtime for me to get a COVID test?

A357: Yes, if the supervisor authorizes it in advance. Since regular time is available, it would be preferable if the supervisor coordinated employee assignments and schedules to use regular time to obtain a COVID test before using overtime.

Q38: If an employee indicates that they are not vaccinated and the same employee previously sent their manager an email in June/July stating they were vaccinated to avoid wearing a mask at work, should managers/supervisors consider disciplinary action against the employee?

A38: Yes. The prior mask policy indicated that individuals who misrepresented their status would be subjected to disciplinary action.

Q39: Does this requirement apply to elected officials?

A39: No. Elected officials are different from employees.

Q40: Does this requirement apply to members of boards, committees, or commissions who might receive a per diem?

A40: No. Individuals serving on boards, committees, or commissions are not employees.

Q41: How does this policy affect new hires?

A41: New hires should report their status to their supervisor. New employees are not added to payroll until their first payroll is complete. After that time, new employees can report their status using Connect2Dane.

Q42: If an unvaccinated employee records a positive test, should the employee continue to be tested in subsequent weeks?

A42: No – after a positive test, unvaccinated employees are not required to get a weekly PCR test until it has been at least 90 days after their initial positive test. After 90 days after a positive test, unvaccinated employees must renew getting weekly tests (or get vaccinated).

If an employee receives a positive test, the first concern should be getting that person proper medical care. Before an employee may return to work, the employee must satisfy the return to work criteria.

After a positive test, the CDC recommends that individuals who test positive should generally not be tested again during 90 days after the first test, unless they have a new exposure, new symptoms, or it is on the advice of a health care provider.

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Q43: Why does Walgreens/CVS ask for proof of insurance? Will I receive a bill for this test?

A43: The Department of Administration has looked into why Walgreens and CVS ask for proof of insurance with a free COVID test. We do not know why they request this information. We believe these pharmacies are offering free testing through a federal program and this information may be required by that federal program. We spoke with SSM Customer Service representative about this issue and they said that it would be unlikely for employees to receive a bill from SSM/Dean. If a bill were to be issued to an employee, a bill would instead come from the pharmacy. If employees have not received a bill from CVS/Walgreens, they are unlikely to receive one from Dean/SSM.

If employees are concerned about receiving a bill as a result of needing to obtain a weekly test, we recommend employees use the pharmacies identified by Public Health. A listing of those pharmacies is available here: <https://publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus/testing>

All of the pharmacies listed on the Public Health website linked above are operating under a contract with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to provide free COVID testing. A condition of that contract is that the pharmacies are prohibited from asking whether the individual has insurance and are prohibited from charging insurance for these services. Instead, these pharmacies receive a reimbursement for COVID testing directly from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.