

Proprietary

From: Global Communications <[REDACTED]>
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Subject: Vaccine Mandate Updates

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August 18, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

Throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have maintained a consistent set of guiding principles—protecting the safety and well-being of our employees and their families and sustaining the supply of medicines and vaccines to our patients and customers. Every decision we have made, including our decision to implement the [U.S. Vaccination Mandate](#) in November 2021, has been guided by science.

As the virus evolves, we as a company will continue to set policy based on the science and what it tells us about how best to maintain a safe working environment. We continue to believe in our U.S. Vaccination Mandate because the data show that vaccination remains the most powerful tool to help reduce hospitalization and serious illness. For this reason, we continue to **strongly** encourage all eligible employees to receive a vaccine booster wherever one is recommended and available, to help further increase vaccine effectiveness.

Evolving Our Guidance & Safety Protocols

Currently, **our COVID-19 Vaccination Mandate remains in effect for all U.S. employees**, except for those who have applied for, and have been granted, a religious or medical exemption. We will also **continue to require all new hires to be vaccinated as a condition of employment unless they apply for, and have been granted an exemption**. Now that Novavax has been authorized for emergency use by the FDA, **we have updated the mandate to include Novavax** as an acceptable vaccination.

We **strongly** encourage all employees with medical or religious exemptions to consider getting the Novavax vaccination and if they do get the vaccination, [update their Workday profile](#) accordingly.

Although we are maintaining the vaccine mandate, we have been re-evaluating the efficacy of the enhanced safety protocols required of our unvaccinated population (such as masking, social distancing, not attending large meetings/events, and testing regularly before coming on-site) against the evolution of the virus. The science tells us that while vaccination continues to be effective in protecting an individual from serious illness, there is little evidence that vaccination is as effective as it once was in helping to prevent infection and transmission of the current variants.

Therefore, effective immediately (August 18, 2022), we are updating our guidance to pause centralized oversight of enhanced safety protocols for our unvaccinated employees. Specifically, this means that unvaccinated employees with approved exemptions will no longer be required to mask (unless there is a general masking requirement at your site), will no longer be required to test prior to coming on-site, and can return to attending meetings/events as normal. Customer-facing employees or anyone engaging externally at non-Merck locations should continue to adhere to the vaccination, masking, and/or testing requirements of their customers or sites.

While this updated guidance covers all U.S. sites, we recognize the importance of enabling local sites to implement COVID-19 mitigation efforts when needed. So, it will be important to **watch for guidance from your site leadership if and when your site may choose to implement additional safety measures in the future.**

As always, we will continue to monitor the state of the pandemic and evaluate the effectiveness of our internal controls and policies. It is important to understand that we are making these changes based on current scientific data about the virus. You may have seen that the [CDC has recently streamlined its COVID-19 guidance](#) to help people better understand their risk, how to protect themselves and others, what actions to take if exposed to COVID-19, and what actions to take if they are sick or test positive for the virus.

As we move forward, we may reinstate enhanced safety protocols for the unvaccinated (or for all) based on the evolving nature of the virus and the available data. Please continue to visit the [COVID Information Center](#) on Sync for the most up-to-date information and guidance.

Thank you for your ongoing support to help to keep each other safe so that together we can fulfill our company's purpose of saving and improving lives around the world.

Global Human Resources

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