



ADVISORY ON COVID-19 VACCINATION IN EMPLOYMENT SETTINGS

Issued on 2 July 2021

1. Comprehensive vaccination coverage in our population will ensure that our population is protected from COVID-19. This will enable Singapore to reopen further both as a society and economy and expedite our recovery from the pandemic. The Government strongly encourages everyone who is medically eligible to get vaccinated when the vaccine is offered.
2. The tripartite partners are issuing this advisory to provide guidance to both employers and employees regarding COVID-19 vaccination in employment settings.

General Workplace Vaccination Policy

3. Employees should do their part by choosing to get vaccinated, to protect themselves as well as others at the workplace. The collective protection from vaccination will be more effective when more people are vaccinated. In the event of a fresh outbreak, the number of cases can be kept low. This will minimise the stress on the healthcare system, ensure that those who are ill get the treatment they need, and allow Singapore to return to normalcy sooner.
4. In line with our national vaccination policy, employers should not make COVID-19 vaccination mandatory. Nonetheless, employers should strongly encourage and facilitate all their medically eligible employees to get vaccinated, e.g. by granting of paid time-off to employees for COVID-19 vaccination, facilitating public education programmes on vaccine safety and efficacy for their employees. Employers may also ask employees for their vaccination status for business purposes e.g. business continuity planning. Employees who decline vaccination should not be penalised such as having their employment terminated on the ground of declining vaccination.
5. There is a small and exceptional number of employment settings where some employees may be exposed to a higher risk of COVID-19 infection. The treatment of such employment settings is elaborated in paragraphs 6 to 13 below.

Employment Settings Where Employees Are Exposed to Higher Risk of COVID-19 Infection

6. There may be instances where an employee's employment setting exposes him or her to a higher risk of COVID-19 infection compared to the general employment setting, either because of work circumstances or living conditions. A useful reference point in assessing whether an employment setting exposes an employee to a higher risk of COVID-19 infection is whether the employee is required to undergo Rostered Routine Testing (RRT), mandated Fast and Easy Testing (FET), or is in regular contact with known COVID-19 cases/persons who are isolated due to risk of COVID-19. The table below provides a guide on such employment settings:

Categories of Employment Settings	Key Considerations	Examples of Jobs/Settings
A. Higher risk of exposure to COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work environment that exposes employees to significantly higher risk of COVID-19 exposure than in general community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laboratory employees working on COVID-19 Employees in regular contact with COVID-19 patients e.g. healthcare employees Aircrew Frontline maritime employees Hotel employees in contact with people serving Stay Home Notice (SHN)
B. Employees in communal living environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communal living environment where Safe Management Measures may not be effective or practicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees living in dormitories
C. Work environment or nature of work does not allow for Safe Management Measures to be effective or practicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities that require masks to be removed frequently; or High density workplaces where safe distancing may not be effective or practicable and there is risk of large clusters forming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional athletes engaged in sports requiring close physical contact Construction, Marine and Process employees (excluding headquarter employees who are not deployed to work sites)

7. To ensure the health and safety of employees and to minimise the risk of outbreaks, employers may, *if they wish to do so*, require COVID-19 vaccination as a company policy for these higher risk employment settings. Employers may also impose this vaccination requirement upfront at the point of recruitment or advertisement for new hires into these higher risk employment settings.

8. Employers who wish to require COVID-19 vaccination for the higher risk employment settings may, in consultation with the unions (if applicable), adopt the following measures for employees in these settings who decline vaccination:

- a) **Redeploy such an employee to another job with lower risk of COVID-19 infection** that is commensurate with the employee's experience and skills, as per existing redeployment policies. If there are no existing redeployment policies within the organisation, the terms and conditions for redeployment should be mutually agreed between employers and employees; or
- b) **Recover COVID-19 related costs (e.g. COVID-19 testing costs or costs of SHN accommodation) incurred by the employer from employees (who declined vaccination) that are over and above the costs incurred for vaccinated employees in similar employment**

settings¹. These costs can be recovered either through salary deductions² or requiring the employee to pay the relevant service provider directly. In addition, employers may adopt a differentiated leave policy for vaccinated employees versus employees who decline vaccination such as putting the latter on no-pay leave for the duration of any SHN served.

9. Other than the measures above, the union and the employer may mutually agree on other measures to be taken for employees who decline vaccination.

10. Under no circumstances should an employer terminate or threaten to terminate the service of an employee on the ground of declining vaccination.

11. If employers adopt a company policy of requiring COVID-19 vaccination for higher risk employment settings, they should provide affected employees with additional paid sick leave (beyond contractual or statutory requirement) to support their recovery from any immediate adverse medical complications arising from vaccination.

12. Employers should exempt (from the vaccination requirement) employees who belong to groups identified by MOH as not suitable to receive the COVID-19 vaccine or are not scheduled for vaccination yet. Please refer to [MOH's website](#) for up-to-date information. To reduce the risk of infection at the workplace, employers may decide whether to redeploy these employees (as described in paragraph 8a above). However, employers should not impose cost recovery measures (as described in paragraph 8b above) if such employees decline the redeployment offer.

13. The tripartite partners expect employers who require vaccination in their company policy to communicate clearly to affected employees the following and make reasonable efforts to find out why employees decline vaccination and address their concerns:

- a) Reassure employees that they will not be penalised or have their employment terminated because they decline COVID-19 vaccination;
- b) Jobs or employment settings which expose employees to a higher risk of COVID-19 infection and the reasons why vaccination is required for these employees;
- c) Measures taken by employers for employees who decline vaccination (e.g. redeployment, cost recovery, leave arrangements while serving SHN); and
- d) Any forms of assistance offered to individuals who suffer from adverse complications due to the vaccination requirement.

Observing Safe Management Measures even after Vaccination

14. Vaccination significantly strengthens our defences against COVID-19. However, it is still important for employers and employees, including those who are vaccinated, to continue observing the Safe Management Measures at workplaces, such as mask-wearing and where required, donning of Personal Protective Equipment.

¹ Excluding costs that employers must bear as required under any legislation.

² Employers should refer to Section 27(1) of the Employment Act when making any salary deductions for recovering COVID-19 related costs.

15. For further queries, please contact:

Ministry of Manpower

[Online Enquiry](#)

www.mom.gov.sg

Ministry of Health

[Online Enquiry](#)

www.moh.gov.sg

National Trades Union Congress

Email: ntucird@ntuc.org.sg

www.ntuc.org.sg

Singapore National Employers Federation

Email: advisory@snef.org.sg

www.snef.org.sg

FAQs on COVID-19 Vaccinations

For employers

Can I require my employees and external stakeholders (e.g. vendors) who access my work sites to be vaccinated?

You may adopt a company policy to require COVID-19 vaccination for your employees who work in employment settings that expose them to a higher risk of COVID-19 infection. Refer to the Advisory on COVID-19 Vaccination in Employment Settings for more details.

For external vendors or contractors who work alongside these employees who are exposed to a higher risk of COVID-19 infection, you may engage the external vendors or contractors to work out a similar arrangement to require COVID-19 vaccination as part of their company policy.

Can I implement disincentives for my employees if they decline COVID-19 vaccination?

Under no circumstances should you terminate or threaten to terminate the service of an employee on the ground of declining vaccination.

If you have imposed a company policy that requires vaccination for employees in higher risk employment settings, you may, in consultation with the unions (if applicable), redeploy employees who decline vaccination to another job with lower risk of COVID-19 infection.

Alternatively, you may recover COVID-19 related costs incurred for these employees that are over and above the costs incurred for vaccinated employees in similar employment settings.

Refer to the Advisory on COVID-19 Vaccination in Employment Settings for more information.

Should I segregate employees who are vaccinated from those who are not?

You should adhere to the [Safe Management Measures](#) for all employees. There is no need to further segregate vaccinated employees from non-vaccinated employees.

Can my vulnerable employees (e.g. those aged 60 and above) be deployed to higher risk employment settings if they have received the vaccination?

Vaccination significantly strengthens our defences against COVID-19. However, you should continue to observe Safe Management Measures at workplaces, including paying special attention to [vulnerable employees](#).

You are encouraged to take appropriate measures to reduce their risk of COVID-19 infection, such as enabling vulnerable employees to work from home, allowing them to travel to or from work at off-peak timings, or temporarily redeploying them to another role within the company.

What type of leave would be applicable to employees who contract COVID-19?

Employees who tested positive for COVID-19 will be entitled to paid [sick leave](#) during treatment, up to the contractual limits which must not be less favourable than what is stated in the Employment Act. For employees who do not have sufficient sick leave, employers could exercise compassion and flexibility by granting additional leave.

Can I request my employees to apply for annual leave to take the vaccination?

Employers are encouraged to provide paid time-off to employees for COVID-19 vaccination, including any mandatory observation period post vaccination if the vaccinations are done during working hours.

Is it recommended to provide additional sick leave for my employees who need to recover from side effects of vaccination? If so, what is the appropriate number of additional sick leave days for such employees?

While vaccinations do not cause problems for the vast majority, some individuals may experience common side effects, similar to other vaccines (such as pain or swelling at injection site, fever, tiredness). Most side effects will resolve within 3 days. In such instances, employers should consider granting additional time-off for employees to rest.

Employees who suffer severe side effects from vaccination should seek medical attention and apply for sick leave. For employees who do not have sufficient sick leave, do exercise compassion and flexibility.

If my employee suffers serious side effects related to the COVID-19 vaccine, can claims be made under Work Injury Compensation Act (WICA)?

In very rare instances, employees may experience serious side effects after receiving the COVID-19 vaccination, such as a severe allergic reaction.

The Vaccine Injury Financial Assistance Programme for COVID-19 Vaccination (VIFAP) provides a one-time goodwill financial assistance to persons who experience serious side effects that are assessed to be related to COVID-19 vaccines administered in Singapore. Refer to [MOH website](#) for details to qualify for VIFAP.

Any claim under WICA for serious side effects due to COVID-19 vaccination will be assessed on a case by case basis. If such a claim does arise, the employer and the employee should approach MOM for further advice.

My employees work in an office setting but have frequent in-person interactions with clients. Is this considered as a higher risk employment setting?

Generally, office settings are not considered as employment settings that expose employees to higher risk of COVID-19 infection. Employers and employees should adhere to the prevailing [Safe Management Measures](#) to ensure COVID-safe workplaces.

Refer to the Advisory on COVID-19 Vaccination in Employment Settings for more details on the key considerations for employment settings that expose employees to a higher risk of COVID-19 infection.

For employees

Can my employer make it mandatory for me to take the COVID-19 vaccination?

We strongly encourage you to get vaccinated when offered by MOH.

In line with our national vaccination policy, your employer should not make COVID-19 vaccination mandatory. Your employer cannot terminate or threaten to terminate your employment if you decline to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

However, if you work in an employment setting that exposes you to a higher risk of COVID-19 infection, your employer may introduce a company policy to require vaccination to minimise the risk of outbreaks.

If you feel that your employer has treated you unfairly over the COVID-19 vaccination at your workplace, you may approach your union or MOM for advice and assistance.

I do not agree with my employer's assessment that my employment setting exposes me to a higher risk of COVID-19 infection. What should I do?

You should discuss with your employer on why he/she has deemed your employment setting to be at higher risk of COVID-19 infection, taking reference from the Advisory on COVID-19 Vaccination in Employment Settings. If you are unable to reach a mutual agreement, you may approach MOM for further advice.