



# Common Flu Q&A, 2012-2013

## Q. Is the Flu Vaccine mandatory?

**A.** Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) regulations require all licensed MA healthcare facilities, as a condition of licensure, to OFFER free of charge, annual influenza vaccine to all personnel (regular employees, contracted employees, volunteers, house staff and students); to document all personnel's receipt of influenza vaccine administered within or outside the facility; and to document the declination of immunization.

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/quality/healthcare/flu/guidelines-reporting-hcp.pdf>

MDPH does *not* require healthcare personnel to be vaccinated, with the exception of long term care facility workers. MNA encourages nurses to educate themselves about risks and benefits of the flu vaccine. Our position has been opposition to a mandate, not to the vaccine.

Vaccination should be based on informed choice. New CDC hospital reporting requirements are extensive; flu incidence among patients and employees must be reported to facilitate CDC's tracking of potential pandemics. For more detailed information regarding these viruses you may access CDC or MDPH info at: [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu) or

<http://publichealth.blog.state.ma.us/h1n1-swine-flu>.

## Q. If I am unable or unwilling to take the vaccine, what happens?

**A.** Healthcare workers must document their declination (their refusal) of immunization by signing a "Declination" form. Currently, MDPH does not require workers to state a reason for declining vaccination. The recommended declination form is on the MNA and DPH web sites at: <http://www.massnurses.org/files/file/Health-and-Safety/Flu/flu-all-attachment-b.pdf> or <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/quality/hcq-circular-letters/flu-all-attachment-b.pdf>

## Q. If I decline the Influenza vaccine must I wear a mask when caring for patients?

**A.** MDPH does not mandate the wearing of masks. However, it may be your employer's policy for unvaccinated workers to wear a mask. Policies vary: some policies specify masks be worn during flu season while caring for patients. Other facilities require nurses to wear a mask when within six feet of a patient; some specify masks be worn when in a patient's room, etc. When you become aware of a new hospital policy on flu vaccination, please contact your local MNA Leadership or contact the MNA.

## Q. I have an allergy to the Influenza vaccine; should I receive the Flu shot?

**A.** No, not without checking with your doctor! Check with your physician or allergist before accepting this vaccine and **ALWAYS** read the "Vaccine Information Sheet" prior to making your decision. <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/vis-facts.htm>