

Frequently asked questions and answers regarding the vaccination requirements for high school athletics participation:

Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) will require proof of a COVID-19 vaccination or weekly testing for those unvaccinated for all students participating in all winter and spring sports and for all out-of-season practices for the remainder of the 2021-22 school year.

LCPS is committed to providing the safest learning environment possible for our students and this vaccination requirement for our student-athletes demonstrates our commitment to the safety of everyone within our schools and communities.

LCPS Information:

Why did LCPS decide to mandate vaccinations for high school athletes?

This is the area where LCPS is seeing the highest number of pauses. The prolonged, close contact with a person infected with COVID-19 is the main driver of transmission. In athletic settings, the number of players, the spacing of competitors and the frequency and duration of contact during competitions will influence the risk of infection. Other factors, such as indoor or outdoor competition venues and the ventilation of indoor facilities also influence the risk of infection. Vaccinating student-athletes and testing adds another layer of protection against the virus, particularly as the majority of students do not wear masks while competing.

Requiring vaccinations reduces the need for contact tracing by both the school staff and the health department. It will also greatly reduce the number of students and teams paused, thereby minimizing any time a student has to be paused from in-person learning.

Was LCPS directed by anyone to develop this mandate? Why are you mandating a vaccine that is currently not part of the state requirements for school attendance?

VDH Interim Guidance for K-12 School Reopening instructs school divisions to prioritize educational opportunities over athletics, extracurricular activities, or other events in the school and surrounding community. Vaccinating our students is a critical step in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 and minimizing any disruption to learning.

While the state mandates certain vaccinations for school enrollment; the COVID-19 vaccine is not currently included in the list of required vaccines for school enrollment. LCPS can require vaccinations for voluntary participation in activities where no credit is earned.

This decision was made following a review of data that showed where our highest number of pauses were occurring over the last 15 months. Our goal is to keep students in school whenever possible. This action should help both lower the number of COVID-19 cases stemming from athletic activities and reduce the time a student is required to pause.

How many LCPS students have received one dose of the vaccine?

As of September 13, 2021, a total of 82.4% of all Loudoun County 16-17 year-olds are currently fully vaccinated and 89.5% have had one dose of a vaccine. A total of 69% of all Loudoun County 12-15 year-olds are currently fully vaccinated and 78.8% have had one dose as of September 13, 2021.

Time Frame for Compliance:

What is the time frame for my first shot?

Winter sports participants must be fully vaccinated by November 8, 2021. Fully vaccinated is defined as 14 days after receiving the 2nd dose of the vaccine. First day of winter tryouts is November 8, 2021. Your first shot must be done by October 4, 2021, if you plan to participate in a winter sport and in order to avoid weekly testing until the student is fully vaccinated.

Spring sports participants must be fully vaccinated by February 21, 2022. Fully vaccinated is defined as 14 days after receiving the 2nd dose of the vaccine. First day of spring tryouts is February 21, 2021. Your first shot must be done by January 18, 2022, if you plan to participate in a spring sport.

What is the time frame for my second shot?

Winter sports participants must have their second shot completed by October 25, 2021, in order to avoid weekly testing until the student is fully vaccinated.

Spring sports participants must have their second shot completed by February 8, 2022.

Can my student-athlete still try out if they have received their first dose and the second dose is not scheduled until after tryouts?

Yes, your student can participate in tryouts if they have had their first dose and are scheduled to receive their second dose no later than November 8th.

My student has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days. Does my student-athlete still have to get vaccinated?

If your student-athlete has tested positive in the past 90 days, then they will have to provide proof of a positive test result. After the 90 day period has passed, then participants will be required to receive their vaccination or weekly testing to remain eligible for participation in high school athletics. Submit the COVID-19 positive test results to the athletics office in your school as you do other health forms and vaccine information for athletes.

If my student already has an exemption from vaccinations, will this exemption apply to the COVID-19 vaccination requirement?

Yes, this would qualify in this situation as well. If this applies to your student, then they will be subject to weekly testing for participation in high school athletics.

How to submit vaccination verification:

How does a parent submit vaccination verification for their Student to participate in VHSL Athletics?

Parents/Guardians will follow the same process for submitting the VHSL Physical Form. A copy of their vaccination card must be submitted to the athletics department for verification.

What if your student has lost their vaccination card?

If you received your vaccination at one of the public vaccination sites in Virginia, you can request a copy of your vaccination card from the Virginia Department of Health. If you received your vaccine from another source, you can contact them and request a copy.

[Request your COVID-19 Vaccination Record from Virginia Department of Health](#)

Questions about the vaccine for this age group:

Why mandate this when I've heard the vaccine is still experimental for young children and it does not stop the spread of COVID-19?

The COVID-19 vaccine is useful to mitigate the spread of the virus and keep our students and staff safe. The Pfizer (brand name Comirnaty) vaccine is no longer under Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for children 16+. LCPS will not mandate the vaccine for student-athletes who are 12-15 years of age. However, vaccination is strongly recommended and LCPS will collect the vaccination information for those 12-15 years of age who wish to provide it and not be subject to weekly testing. Proof of vaccination will greatly limit the necessity for a student to be paused for contact tracing or being quarantined, therefore reducing missing any time from the team or classroom. Those that are not vaccinated must understand that when a close contact occurs that they will be paused from the activity and classroom for as long as it takes the LCPS to complete its contact tracing and provide the release for the student to return. Participating students who are not vaccinated will need to submit a weekly negative COVID-19 test.

What about the studies that show 12-17 year-olds have had the largest number of myocardial incidents related to the vaccine?

As with any activity, if parents are concerned about the health and welfare of their child, participation in athletics is optional and students do not have to participate.

[The CDC](#) continues to recommend that everyone aged 12 years and older get vaccinated for COVID-19. The known risks of COVID-19 illness and its related, possibly severe complications, such as long-term health problems, hospitalization, and even death, far outweigh the potential risks of having a rare adverse reaction to vaccination, including the possible risk of myocarditis or pericarditis.

Getting the Vaccine:

Where can I go to get my student vaccinated?

You can visit the Loudoun County Health Department website to find a location and schedule an appointment: Link: <https://www.loudoun.gov/covid19vaccine>

Can you please let me know where Comirnaty will be available in Loudoun County?

Comirnaty is the new name for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. It is the same vaccine as the one that was first authorized for use in December 2020. Over 200 million people in the U.S. have received the Pfizer (brand name Comirnaty) vaccine. Please contact your medical provider or health department for information on where to obtain the Comirnaty vaccine.

Testing Information:

What are my options as a parent if I want my student to participate in VHSL Athletics but not be vaccinated for COVID-19?

Parents will be required to provide consent to participate in the weekly testing offered at each high school or provide testing results from an approved VDH testing site. Click [here](#) for testing sites, including multiple testing sites that provide free testing.

Where will testing be offered?

LCPS is actively working with potential testing partners, programs and grant programs to make testing possible at school, and free for student-athletes. Expect announcements to be made soon. In the meantime, many tests are free or available at sites around the county. The Loudoun County Health Department has information available about COVID-19 free testing events and where to find COVID-19 testing locations available [on their website](#).

Is parent consent required for weekly testing?

Parental consent is required for participation in any free COVID-19 screening testing program offered by LCPS and/or through the ViSSTA Program. If the parent refuses to provide consent for testing, then they must test at an approved testing location and submit the results to the athletic department each Monday to remain eligible for participation.

How does the parent/guardian submit testing results weekly?

Parents/ Guardians may submit weekly testing results via email or by submitting results to the athletic department. This is the same process that athletic departments utilize when collecting the VHSL physical form each school year.

Background information

Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) will require proof of a COVID-19 vaccination or weekly testing for those unvaccinated for all students participating in Virginia High School League (VHSL) winter and spring sports and for all out-of-season practices for the remainder of the 2021-22 school year. The LCPS decision to establish vaccination as a requirement for athletic participation is guided by the desire to protect the health and safety of all students and staff members. Student-athletes are a particularly vulnerable group who, as a result of their athletic participation, are required to travel to off-campus events and to compete against and interact with student-athletes from other schools. Participation in athletics creates a higher risk for exposure to COVID-19 and also increases the risk of exposure to their classmates, school staff, and the community. LCPS recognizes the importance of vaccinating students and employees as a crucial step in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 and minimizing any disruption to in-person learning. Approximately 40% of past COVID-related disruptions to instruction for high school students have come as a result of exposure during athletics.

LCPS is committed to providing the safest learning environment possible for our students and this vaccination requirement for our student-athletes demonstrates our commitment to the safety of everyone within our schools and communities.

Public health guidance dictates that students considered close contacts of an individual testing

positive for COVID-19 refrain from participating in in-person activities, including instruction and sports. Students who are not vaccinated may need to quarantine for up to 10 days following an exposure to a positive individual. While some members of an athletic team may need to pause following a report of a positive case, those that are fully vaccinated and who do not develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19 may resume in-person activities much sooner or avoid the need to quarantine altogether. This requirement will help reduce the number of students paused following the report of a positive case, which will, in turn, limit interruptions to the instructional day and athletic events.