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Updated advisory on COVID-19 vaccination at the workplace

Issued on 23 August 2021

1. Although Singapore's vaccination rates are one of the highest in the world, we need to continue to expand our vaccine coverage to optimise our resilience against COVID-19. Hence, the Government has announced that from 1 October 2021, employees in selected sectors ¹ would be required to be vaccinated or undergo regular testing (i.e. "Vaccinate or Regular Test" (VoRT) regime). The Public Service, as the largest employer in Singapore, will also lead by example in implementing the VoRT. A fully vaccinated workforce ensures a safe workplace and safe environment for everyone.
2. The tripartite partners are issuing this advisory to provide guidance to both employers and employees regarding COVID-19 vaccination policies at the workplace. This advisory supersedes the Advisory on COVID-19 Vaccination in Employment Settings issued on 2 July 2021.

All employers encouraged to adopt the VoRT regime

3. To protect employees and make workplaces more resilient, the tripartite partners urge all employers to follow the example set by the Public Service and consider **adopting the VoRT regime as a company policy for existing employees and new hires**.

Vaccination-differentiated workplace measures under the VoRT regime²

4. Employers may, in consultation with the unions (if applicable), adopt differentiated workplace measures for vaccinated³ and unvaccinated employees in their workforce, as follows:
 - a. **Testing frequency.** To minimise risks of COVID-19 outbreaks at the workplace, employers may adopt the VoRT regime on a voluntary basis and subject unvaccinated employees to additional COVID-19 tests (compared to vaccinated employees). The frequency of testing can take reference from the frequency under MOH's guidelines for the VoRT regime, i.e. twice a week for unvaccinated employees in selected sectors. A test done under the existing Fast and Easy Testing (FET) or the Rostered Routine Testing (RRT) regime, which is either a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) or supervised FET, also counts towards this requirement.
 - b. **Work and social events.** Employers may require unvaccinated employees to undergo Pre-Event Testing (PET) before participating in workplace events, or implement reduced group sizes when unvaccinated employees participate in such events, especially those involving mask-off activities, in line with the prevailing MOH guidelines.
 - c. **Deployment.** While employers may continue to deploy unvaccinated employees in higher risk activities with regular testing, they can also decide whether to redeploy these employees to another job with lower risk of COVID-19 infection, 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.

- d. **Others.** Employers can also, on their own accord, implement other workplace measures. In doing so, employers must be prepared to justify to employees and/or the Government (e.g. in the event of a dispute) that such measures are reasonable and necessary for business operations and to better protect the health and safety of all employees. The union and the employer may mutually agree on other vaccination-differentiated workplace measures.

Additional costs related to medically eligible but unvaccinated employees under the VoRT regime

5. Some costs are necessary and common for both vaccinated and unvaccinated employees, and employers should bear these costs.
6. Other costs are required only for unvaccinated employees. Employers can require **medically eligible but unvaccinated employees (i.e. excluding employees who are medically ineligible⁴ for mRNA vaccines)** to bear such additional costs as follows:
- a. **COVID-19 related expenses.** Employers may recover from these employees COVID-19 related expenses⁵ (e.g. cost of test kits⁶, costs of Stay-Home Notice (SHN) accommodation) that are incurred over and above those for vaccinated employees. These expenses can be recovered either through salary deductions⁷ or by requiring these employees to pay the relevant service provider directly.
 - b. **Leave.** Unvaccinated employees may be discharged later from treatment or may be served with longer periods of movement restrictions such as SHN⁸, compared to vaccinated employees. In such situations, employers can require that the additional days a medically eligible but unvaccinated employee has to serve, be taken from existing leave entitlements. If leave entitlements have been exhausted, employers may require such an employee to go on no-pay leave.
 - c. **Medical benefits.** Employers may choose to exclude these employees from medical benefits associated with COVID-19 (e.g. insurance coverage)⁹.
7. Under no circumstances should an employer terminate or threaten to terminate the service of an employee on the basis of vaccination status alone. Employers should also not place employees on no-pay leave for an extended duration without their mutual consent in writing. However, employers may exercise their right to contractually terminate employment if unvaccinated employees do not comply with reasonable vaccination-differentiated workplace measures.

Timeline for employers to adopt the VoRT regime

8. Employers should take steps to prepare their workforce early in the lead up to the VoRT regime that will be implemented from 1 October 2021. The tripartite partners urge employers who adopt the VoRT regime as their company policy to communicate clearly and in advance to affected employees and jobseekers on the vaccination-differentiated workplace measures and any associated costs to employees who are medically eligible but decline vaccination.

Monitoring and facilitating vaccination for all workplaces

9. All employers may ask employees for their vaccination status for business purposes (e.g. business continuity planning). Employers that adopt the VoRT regime can further require employees to produce proof of vaccination. Employees who refuse to do so would be treated as unvaccinated for the purposes of the vaccination-differentiated measures and the bearing of costs as per Paragraphs 4 and 6.
10. Employers should urge all their medically eligible employees who have yet to be vaccinated to do so, and implement public education programmes on vaccine safety and efficacy for their employees. Employers should facilitate vaccination by granting paid time-off to employees for COVID-19 vaccination, and additional paid sick leave (beyond contractual or statutory requirement) in the rare event that the employee experiences a vaccine-related adverse event.
11. Employees too, should do their part and get vaccinated as soon as possible. Doing so protects fellow co-workers who are medically ineligible for vaccination, and also protects oneself from severe outcomes should they be infected. As of 16 August 2021, almost 90% of Singapore's adult population¹⁰ have received at least the first dose of COVID-19

vaccination under the national vaccination programme. Employees should cooperate with their employers in keeping workplaces safe as we strive to increase our vaccination rate.


12. 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.
13. For further queries, please contact:

Ministry of Manpower

[Online enquiry](#)

www.mom.gov.sg

Ministry of Health

[Online enquiry](#) 

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FOOTNOTE

1. Sectors subjected to the 'Vaccinate or Regular Test' regime from 1 October 2021 onwards include healthcare, eldercare, settings with children 12 years and below, sectors that interact with customers in higher-risk mask-off settings (e.g. F&B establishments, gyms and fitness studios, personal care services), etc. **Refer to MOH's website for more details, including the full list of sectors covered.**
2. Employers may refer to their respective sector agencies for further details on implementing vaccination-differentiated workplace measures.
3. An individual will be considered fully vaccinated either (i) 2 weeks after he/she has received the full regimen of Pfizer-BioNTech/Comirnaty, Moderna, or any World Health Organisation's Emergency Use Listing (WHO EUL) vaccines; or (ii) 2 weeks after he/she has received one dose of Pfizer-BioNTech/Comirnaty or Moderna vaccines, upon recovery from COVID-19.
4. The Government will fund the test kits only for employees from the selected sectors on the VoRT regime who are certified to be medically ineligible for the mRNA vaccines. Employers on the VoRT regime on a voluntary basis should take reference to also fund the test kits for the medically ineligible employees or have in place other arrangements for these employees.
5. For instance, this includes testing costs incurred under the VoRT regime but excludes costs that employers must bear as required under any legislation.
6. Employers should not recover the costs of the test kits from employees if such costs are being covered by the Government.
7. Employers should refer to Section 27(1)(i) of the Employment Act when making any salary deductions for recovering COVID-19 related costs.
8. Refer to MOH website for more information on the **different types of movement restrictions.**
9. Employers cannot exclude employees from medical benefits required under any legislation.
10. **MOH's update on local COVID-19 Situation and Vaccination Progress (16 Aug 2021).**

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