



More than 7,000 employees receive vaccine through employer-arranged clinics

Through employer-arranged clinics and direct appointments with the New River Health District (NRHD), other local health districts, and local pharmacies, a significant number of Virginia Tech employees are now fully or partially vaccinated against COVID-19.

Over the past three weeks, Virginia Tech partnered with NRHD and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) to offer employees vaccination clinic appointments.

Clinics were held at the Dedmon Center on the campus of Radford University on March 30 through April 1, where 1,500 employees were vaccinated, and April 6 through 8, where approximately 3,000 employees received a vaccine.

In addition, approximately 2,500 employees were vaccinated over the past couple of months through Virginia Tech's partnership with the NRHD and VDH. This partnership provided vaccines to employees in the 1a and 1b groups, which included employees in Schiffert Health Center, Dining Services, facilities, housekeeping, and other front-line workers. Carilion Clinic helped vaccinate university employees at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine starting in January 2021.

In accordance with instructions from the NRHD and VDH, university employees who are 65 and older and those who are 16 to 64 with certain health conditions have received vaccines through direct registration using the statewide vaccine preregistration survey at <https://vaccinate.virginia.gov/>. Further, employees have been vaccinated other ways, such as local pharmacies and through direct contact with the NRHD and other health districts in their localities across the commonwealth.

"We are thrilled with the success of employee vaccinations," said Bryan Garey, vice president for human resources. "A cross-functional team that included representatives from Human Resources, Virginia Tech Emergency Management, Hokie Wellness, Student Affairs, University Relations, and others from our colleges and divisions have worked hard to provide employees multiple opportunities to receive the vaccine.

"The response we have seen – both through clinics and their own initiative – is a testament that our employees want to protect themselves and others in

our community. This is an important accomplishment for Virginia Tech as we work toward providing as much of an in-person experience for our students as possible during the 2021-22 academic year."

Virginia Tech has more than 12,400 employees, including approximately 8,100 full-time faculty and staff, approximately 1,300 part-time faculty and staff, and approximately 3,000 graduate assistants. The university is currently asking employees to participate in a voluntary vaccine reporting survey at <https://vtnews.vt.edu/notices/oem-vaccine-self-report-app.html>; vaccine reporting is confidential with only aggregate totals being reported.

In addition, there are approximately 3,500 undergraduate students who work in a variety of roles at the university. Undergraduate student employees were also offered the opportunity to participate in the NRHD vaccination clinics.

"Thank you to every employee who took advantage of a vaccination opportunity through Virginia Tech or sought another one. Our employees' commitment to health and safety is clear. Through them, we have taken a tremendous step toward achieving herd immunity on our Blacksburg campus and other Virginia Tech locations," said Mike Mulhare, assistant vice president for emergency management. "Next, with the NRHD moving into Phase 2, we will turn our attention to providing students vaccination opportunities."

On April 8, the NRHD announced that it had moved into Phase 2, which means everyone age 16 and older who lives or works in the district will be eligible to get the vaccine. According to the NRHD press release at <https://www.nrvroadtowellness.com/news/new-river-health-district-moves-to-phase-2-today>, during the transition, the district is initially targeting college students, which was communicated to all Virginia Tech students on April 9. On April 15, a student vaccination clinic will be held at Lane Stadium, where 2,500 students will receive a vaccine. Appointments for this week's clinic are full.

A message from Vice President for Human Resources Bryan Garey about the campus climate survey

To the Virginia Tech community,

Our university is a place with many voices, diverse opinions, and vigorous debates. Our commitment to listening to each other is one way we learn about ourselves and others – and hopefully grow in understanding.

That's why I want to encourage everyone to participate in this year's climate survey. The survey, which has been simplified and streamlined from previous surveys, will help us better understand employee perceptions relating to our university's climate, including diversity, inclusion, leadership, work environment, and job satisfaction.

Today (April 13), all faculty, staff, wage employees, and graduate assistants, across all locations, will receive an email from climatesurvey@vt.edu inviting them to complete the survey between now and May 3. Those who do not have computer access will be able to complete the survey by using a QR code, shared computer, or submitting a paper survey.

The information you provide us will lead to a better understanding of the campus experience for different groups of employees across our locations. It will help us develop strategies and make informed decisions that will inspire positive outcomes. It will also give us an understanding of the level of employee engagement and perceptions of COVID-19.

I want to assure everyone that the information we receive from the survey is confidential and will be protected. Although participants have a unique link, employee data is not part of the survey; only your responses to the survey questions. Names and identifiers are removed, and only aggregated data will be reported.

Thank you in advance for taking the climate survey. To see results from previous surveys, visit the HR website at <https://www.hr.vt.edu/hiring-employee-transactions/hr-reporting-analytics/climate-survey.html>. Every response matters so please use this opportunity to speak up, share your input, and help make Virginia Tech a better place to work, study, and serve.

Sincerely,
Bryan Garey

Hokie Health: The positive impacts of good nutrition

When most of us think of nutrition, we think about its connection to physical health. However, what we eat also plays an important role in our mental and emotional well-being.

The gastrointestinal system is intricately connected with chemical messengers (also called neurotransmitters), such as serotonin and dopamine, that carry information from the gut to the brain. Fueling the body with nutrient-dense foods encourages the growth of beneficial bacteria in the gut, ultimately supporting the function of these chemical messengers. Conversely, an eating pattern that predominately relies on foods with few beneficial nutrients may hinder neurotransmitter function and negatively impact mood and focus.

There are many foods that provide nutrients to support the brain-gut connection, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats, fermented foods, beans, legumes, and lean proteins.

When we are physically well, we feel better mentally and emotionally, and vice versa. Hokie Wellness offers opportunities for employees to learn more about how to take care of your whole health – mental, emotional, and physical.

With the wealth of nutrition information available on the internet, it can sometimes be challenging to separate nutrition myths from facts. Virginia Tech dietetic intern, Kamryn Zimmer, will host a virtual "Nutrition Myths and Tips" lunch and learn on Thursday, April 22, from 12-1 p.m. Participants will learn about common nutrition myths as well as practical advice for making everyday meals more nutritious. Registration is required at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DQBFWYR>. A Zoom link will be sent to participants 1-2 days prior to the program.

Visit the Employee Wellness at Home site at <https://hokiewellness.vt.edu/hokie-wellness-at-home/employee-wellness-at-home.html> for more information on virtual workshops, connection sessions, and other wellness resources offered. Learn more about how we can be Better Together at Virginia Tech.

Hokie Wellness serves Virginia Tech to foster a healthier community by providing prevention services, education, outreach, and resources to employees and students. If you have questions, need help, or would like to join the Hokie Wellness Google Group to stay up to date with monthly updates, contact the team at hokiewellness@vt.edu.

Open enrollment is May 3 – 17; update home address

Open enrollment for state-provided benefits (health care and flexible spending plans) is May 3-17, 2021. All changes made during open enrollment will take effect July 1, 2021.

During open enrollment, full-time Virginia Tech employees who are eligible for benefits are given the opportunity to enroll in a health plan and/or a flexible spending account, change health plans, add or remove dependents, or waive state health coverage.

Open enrollment packets and insurance cards are mailed to home addresses on record in Banner.

We encourage all faculty and staff to review their address and update it, if necessary. To update your address, log in to Hokie Spa at <https://hokiespa.vt.edu/>, select the Hokie Spa tab, then select Personal Information to make updates.

If you have questions, please contact the HR Service Center at hrrservicecenter@vt.edu or 540-231-9331.