

# Virtual Mentor

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## THE CODE SAYS

### **The American Medical Association *Code of Medical Ethics*' Opinion on Physicians' Responsibility to be Vaccinated**

#### **Opinion 9.133 Routine Universal Immunization of Physicians**

As professionals committed to promoting the welfare of individual patients and the health of the public and to safeguarding their own and their colleagues' well-being, physicians have an ethical responsibility to take appropriate measures to prevent the spread of infectious disease in health care settings. Conscientious participation in routine infection control practices, such as hand washing and respiratory precautions is a basic expectation of the profession. In some situations, however, routine infection control is not sufficient to protect the interests of patients, the public, and fellow health care workers.

In the context of a highly transmissible disease that poses significant medical risk for vulnerable patients or colleagues, or threatens the availability of the health care workforce, particularly a disease that has potential to become epidemic or pandemic, and for which there is an available, safe, and effective vaccine, physicians have an obligation to:

- (a) Accept immunization absent a recognized medical, religious, or philosophic reason to not be immunized.
- (b) Accept a decision of the medical staff leadership or health care institution, or other appropriate authority to adjust practice activities if not immunized (e.g., wear masks or refrain from direct patient care). It may be appropriate in some circumstances to inform patients about immunization status.

Issued June 2011 based on the report [“Routine Universal Immunization of Physicians for Vaccine-Preventable Disease,”](#) adopted November 2010.

#### **Related in VM**

[Mandated Influenza Vaccines and Health Care Workers' Autonomy](#), September 2010

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