



US Public Health Service

## FAQ: Medical Waivers

Q: What is a medical waiver?

A: Medical waivers are personal exemptions from performing or engaging in one or more of the following activities:

- (a) Receiving one or more immunizations;
- (b) Individual component(s) required for passing the Annual Physical Fitness Test (APFT);
- (c) Completing Basic Life Support training; or
- (d) Other requirements necessary for the Basic level of force readiness that are impacted by specific medical conditions.

Q: What types of medical waivers are there?

A: There are two types of waivers:

(a) *Permanent (long term) medical waivers*: may be granted under special circumstances for medically documented conditions that are likely to improve in greater than 12 months and in less than 5 years. Long term medical waivers may be amended at any time if clinically indicated, and will automatically be reviewed at the time of an officer's periodic medical examination. Officers should view permanent medical waivers as 'long term' and not 'permanent' as they will be reviewed **at least once every 5 years** by a DCCPR/Medical Affairs (MA) Medical Reviewing Official (MRO) and extended only upon concurrence by a MA MRO. Ongoing need for long-term medical waivers may require an officer to undergo fitness-for-duty evaluation as well as review by retention board.

(b) *Time-limited (temporary) medical waivers*: may be granted for documented health conditions that are likely to improve within 12 months, or less, from the date that the request was received. A temporary medical waiver may be extended beyond 12 months for the same condition upon which the original waiver was granted following reassessment and approval by a MRO. Temporary medical waivers must specify an expiration date. If no date is specified, the profile will automatically expire at the end of the third month.

Q: What steps must I take to begin the medical waiver process?

A: The steps to request a medical waiver are as follows:

1. Submit medical documentation from your attending health care provider to DCCPR/MA for review and determination as to whether one or more waivers should be granted. The information can be submitted to MA by mail, fax, or email (contact information provided below).
  - Officer must send in a brief written narrative summarizing the purpose and timeframe of the request.



US Public Health Service

- Health care provider should submit a diagnosis, specify conditions to be waived, recommended waiver period, and any additional relevant medical evidence supporting the request.
  - Readiness waiver requests must specify each readiness criteria for which exemption is requested.
2. Upon receipt of a request for medical waiver consideration, the MRO will determine whether to:
- Deny the request for medical waiver;
  - Grant a temporary waiver and if so, what component(s) of physical readiness and/or immunizations the officer is exempted from and duration of the medical waiver period; or
  - Grant a long term medical waiver and if so, what aspects of physical readiness and/or immunizations the officer is exempted from and duration of the medical waiver period.
  - Note: Officers with an approved waiver will be exempt only from readiness requirements as annotated on the approved waiver. For example, if an approved waiver exempts an officer from completing the APFT, that officer is still required to complete all other readiness requirements that are not covered by the waiver (i.e., BLS, immunizations, medical exam, etc.).

Q: I recently became pregnant. Do I need a medical waiver to cover the pregnancy and post-partum period?

A: Yes, you will need to submit for a temporary medical waiver and when approved, officers are exempt from the APFT and from taking all immunizations except influenza and tetanus-diphtheria during pregnancy.

*Steps to submit for a pregnancy and post-partum medical waiver:*

1. Submit documentation establishing the diagnosis along with a written request for a waiver (see example below) to DCCPR/MA.

[insert date]

Dear Medical Affairs Staff:

I am writing to inform you of my pregnancy. I am due to deliver around [insert date] (see attached medical documentation). I would like to request a waiver for APFT, applicable immunizations, and deployment during my pregnancy until the end of <insert month> 20xx (180 days post-partum convalescence).

Please contact me by phone or by email for any questions.

Sincerely,



US Public Health Service

[Insert name]

Rank, USPHS (PHS #####, Direct Access Employee ID)

2. Upon receipt, a DCCPR/MA MRO will issue or approve a temporary waiver exempting the officer from taking the APFT and the immunizations.
3. The officer should verify basic readiness and medical status on the CCMIS website.
4. Postpartum officers will be granted a temporary medical waiver from participating in the APFT for 180 days following conclusion of a pregnancy. Officers are expected to use the time in preparation for the APFT, after receiving clearance from the attending physician/health care provider to resume physical fitness training. If it is determined that the officer requires an extension of the temporary waiver, because of complications or unusual medical program, then the medical waiver can be modified by the attending physician/health care provider as appropriate.

Q: Do I need a medical waiver if I'm breastfeeding or will my pregnancy waiver cover this time period?

A: Officers who are breast-feeding are required to seek a temporary medical waiver separate from the pregnancy waiver, exempting them from deployment and some immunizations pursuant to the recommendation of the officer's attending physician/health care provider. The breastfeeding waiver does not exempt officers from the APFT. Officers must provide supporting documentation to DCCPR/MA in order to have their medical waivers approved. Breastfeeding waivers should be submitted once the pregnancy waiver has expired.

Q: What if I'm denied a medical waiver?

A: Officers who are denied temporary or long term medical waivers by an MRO may appeal the decision as follows:

- (1) Officers may appeal the decision to the Chief of MA within 30 days of being informed of the initial denial. The Chief of MA will assign a physician, or dentist if applicable, to review the waiver request and accompanying information. The MRO may not be the same MRO that originally reviewed the officer's request for a waiver. Based upon this review, the MRO may:
  - (a) Affirm the decision to deny the officer's request;
  - (b) Overturn the decision denying the medical waiver and grant either a temporary or long term waiver as medically indicated by the supporting medical documentation; or
  - (c) Refer the officer to a Military Treatment Facility (MTF) or other health care facility for further evaluation and, based upon this referral, render a decision as to whether to grant or, deny the officer's request.
- (2) If the decision to deny an officer's request for a medical waiver is affirmed, then the officer has 30 days from the date of the denial to appeal the decision to the Surgeon General.



## US Public Health Service

Q: Can my primary care physician/healthcare provider grant a medical waiver?

A: All health care providers assigned to DCCPR/MA may grant medical waivers for temporary or permanent medical conditions. In addition, the following health care providers are also authorized to grant medical waivers contingent upon concurrence from DCCPR:

- (1) Any health care provider authorized to grant a medical waiver for a temporary or permanent medical condition by the Commanding Officer of an MTF;
- (2) Any approved Tricare provider; and
- (3) Under exceptional circumstances, any other health care provider authorized to grant medical waivers by DCCPR.

Q: Can an officer be granted a medical waiver from immunizations?

A: Yes, officers may be granted temporary or long term medical waivers from receiving selected immunizations. For example, officers may receive permanent waivers if they have an identified allergy to one or more of the components of a vaccine, or in some cases, are immuno-compromised. Likewise, officers may be granted temporary waivers from receiving selected immunizations during pregnancy or the postpartum period. The procedures for obtaining a long term or temporary medical waiver are the same as for other medical conditions.

Q: I need to submit a request for a medical waiver to MA, who should I contact?

A: Medical waiver requests should be directed to Dr. Alvin Abrams, [alvin.abrams@hhs.gov](mailto:alvin.abrams@hhs.gov) or Dr. Melvin Williams, [melvin.williams@hhs.gov](mailto:melvin.williams@hhs.gov).

For a complete listing of Medical Affairs staff and contact information, visit [Medical Affairs \(https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/DCCPR\\_medical\\_affairs\\_m.aspx\)](https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/DCCPR_medical_affairs_m.aspx).

### **RESOURCES:**

For more information:

- Manual Circular 377: Basic Level of Force Readiness Standards for the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service (Corps)

<https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/ccis/documents/mc377.pdf>

- Personnel Operations Memorandum (POM) 15-004: Annual Physical Fitness Test (APFT) - Revised

[https://dcp.psc.gov/CCMIS/ccis/documents/pom15\\_004.pdf](https://dcp.psc.gov/CCMIS/ccis/documents/pom15_004.pdf)

Last revised: 12/20/16, CDR Neel Patel, PharmPAC Readiness Section, APFT and Readiness Resource Workgroup