

## VACCINATIONS FOR ALL

# COVID-19 Booster Shots

## Frequently Asked Questions

The COVID-19 booster shot is recommended for eligible people who received their second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine six months ago or more and who are at increased risk of COVID-19 exposure or severe COVID-19 illness, including people who are 65 years of age and older or those that received the single dose Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine two months ago or more and are 18 years of age and older.

### What is a booster shot?

A booster shot is an additional dose of a vaccine after completing a vaccine series and is used to boost immunity against the virus as protection may have decreased over time (this is called waning immunity).

### Who can get a booster shot?

6 months after receiving the second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, the following groups are eligible for a booster shot:

- + People 65 or older
- + People who live in a nursing home or other long-term care facility
- + People 18 to 64 who have an underlying medical condition that increases their risk for severe COVID-19

- + People 18 to 64 who are at increased risk of COVID-19 exposure due to their job (for example, health care workers and teachers) or where they live or frequently visit (for example, a homeless shelter)

2 months after receiving the single dose J&J vaccine, people 18 or older are eligible for a booster shot

### Why is a booster shot recommended?

The COVID-19 vaccines are still very effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalization and death due to COVID-19. However, some studies show that protection against infection from the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines may start to decrease after about six months, or after about two months from the J&J vaccine. A booster shot may provide extra protection to people who are at increased risk of COVID-19 exposure or severe COVID-19 illness, especially with the presence of the Delta variant circulating in our communities.

### Which medical conditions increase the risk of severe COVID-19 illness?

Medical conditions that increase the risk of severe COVID-19 include diabetes, heart conditions, chronic kidney disease, chronic lung disease, liver disease, cancer, dementia, HIV and pregnancy. For a complete list see: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html)

### **Who is at increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 in their workplace or another setting?**

Jobs that may increase the risk of exposure to COVID-19 include health care workers, teachers, day care staff, and restaurant and grocery store workers. Other settings where there may be increased risk of exposure include homeless shelters and prisons.

### **How do I know if I need a booster shot?**

Talk to your health care provider if you have questions about whether you should get a booster shot. If you need help finding a provider, call 311 or call 212-COVID-19 (212-268-4319) and speak with a nurse to learn if you are eligible.

### **Can people who are pregnant, nursing or trying to get pregnant get a booster?**

Pregnant and recently pregnant people are at increased risk for developing severe illness from COVID-19 compared with non-pregnant people. Pregnant people should be vaccinated against COVID-19. If pregnant people meet the eligibility criteria, they should receive a booster.

### **What are the risks of getting a booster shot?**

For many people who have received two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines or a single dose of the J&J vaccine, the benefits of getting a booster shot outweigh any risks. So far, reactions reported after getting a booster shot were similar to those after the initial doses. Tiredness and arm soreness were the most commonly reported side effects. Most side effects were mild to moderate.

### **Is the booster shot the same vaccine as the first two doses?**

Yes. The booster shot is the same vaccine as each of the first two Pfizer or Moderna doses, or the single J&J dose. The dose for the Moderna booster, however, is half as much as what is administered for the first two doses.

### **Does the brand of my booster shot need to be the same brand of vaccine I first received?**

Vaccinated people should try to get the same vaccine they initially received as their booster, but they have the choice to switch to either of the other two vaccine types.

### **When should I get a booster shot?**

You should get a booster shot six months or more after you received your second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, if eligible, or two months or more after you received the single dose of the J&J COVID-19 vaccine.

### **If we need a booster shot, does that mean that the vaccines aren't working?**

No. COVID-19 vaccines are working well to prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death, even against the widely circulating Delta variant. However, public health experts are starting to see mild reductions in protection, especially among certain populations.

### **I am immunocompromised and got a third vaccine dose. Should I get a booster shot too?**

Moderately and severely immunocompromised people aged  $\geq 18$  years who completed an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine primary series and received an additional mRNA vaccine dose may receive a single COVID-19 booster dose (Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, or J&J) at least 6 months after completing their third mRNA vaccine dose.

### **Where can I get a free booster shot?**

Pfizer and J&J booster shots are available at the 11 hospitals in the NYC Health + Hospitals system. Moderna booster shots are available at any NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health site. You do not need to go to the same location where you got your first two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or single dose of the J&J vaccine. Walk in to any NYC Health + Hospitals acute care hospital or NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health site for your booster or call 1-877-829-4692 for help in many languages.

### **Can I get a booster shot at the same time as other vaccines (such as the flu vaccine)?**

Yes. It is safe to get a booster shot at the same time as other vaccines, or any time before or after. If you have not yet gotten your flu shot, both are available at NYC Health + Hospitals acute care hospital locations.

### **Do I need a booster shot to be fully vaccinated?**

No. People are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after the second dose of a two-dose vaccine (such as Pfizer or Moderna) or two weeks after the single-dose J&J vaccine.

### **Will booster shots be mandated?**

The New York State vaccination mandate for health care workers only applies to first and second doses. The mandate does not include booster shots.

### **Are booster shots recommended for children?**

No. At this time, Pfizer is the only vaccine authorized for use in children between the ages of 5 and 11 years. People aged 5-17 years are not currently eligible for booster shots.