

# VACCINATIONS FOR ALL

## COVID-19 Booster Shots Frequently Asked Questions

COVID-19 boosters are recommended for everyone 5 years of age or older who completed their primary COVID-19 vaccine series (those ages 5-11 years who received Moderna as their primary series are not yet eligible for boosters). Eligible children ages 5 to 11-years-old should receive the original Pfizer monovalent booster. People ages 12 and over should receive the updated bivalent booster.

### What is a booster shot?

A booster shot is an additional dose of a vaccine after completing a primary 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?

Everyone 5 to 11 years should get a dose of the original monovalent booster at least five months after receiving the second dose of their primary Pfizer vaccination series. At this time, those who received Moderna as their primary series are not yet eligible for boosters.

For people ages 12 years and older, the only authorized booster is the updated bivalent booster. People ages 12 years and older can no longer get the original monovalent booster.

People ages 12 and older should receive a dose of the updated bivalent booster at least two months after their primary COVID-19 vaccine series or last booster.

The Pfizer-BioNTech updated bivalent booster is authorized for those 12 years of age and older; the Moderna updated bivalent booster is authorized for those 18 years of age and older.

### How is the updated bivalent booster different from the original monovalent booster?

The new booster is a “bivalent” vaccine which means that it is a new formulation containing a combination of the original vaccine as well as a new vaccine targeting Omicron and its subvariants, BA.4 and BA.5. That’s why it is “updated.”

### Why is a booster shot recommended?

The COVID-19 vaccines are still effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalization and death due to COVID-19. However, studies show that protection against infection from the COVID-19 vaccines start to decrease over time. A booster shot may provide extra protection to people by ‘boosting’ their immune system especially in those who are at increased risk of severe COVID-19 illness.

## **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 (including high blood pressure), chronic kidney disease, chronic lung disease, liver disease, cancer, dementia, HIV and pregnancy. For a complete list see: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/needextraprecautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/needextraprecautions/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?**

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 vaccine doses. Tiredness and arm soreness were the most commonly reported side effects. Most side effects were mild to moderate and resolve on their own.

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

Vaccinated people may get the same vaccine they initially received as their primary vaccine series or prior booster or they may switch to either of the other two vaccine types.

## **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. However, public health experts are starting to see mild reductions in protection over time, especially among certain higher-risk populations.

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

Pfizer updated booster shots are available at the 11 hospitals in the NYC Health + Hospitals system. Moderna updated 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 primary vaccine series or prior booster shot. Walk in appointments are available at select locations. 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 will be 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?**

At this time, everyone aged 5 and older is encouraged to receive a booster shot (those 5-11 years who received Moderna as their primary series are not yet eligible for boosters). People ages 5-11 who previously got the Pfizer primary series more than 5 months ago are eligible for the Pfizer monovalent booster shot only. Children ages 12 and older are eligible for the updated bivalent Pfizer booster and those 18 and older are eligible for the updated bivalent booster two months after their primary COVID-19 vaccine series or last booster.