Frequently Asked Questions
COVID-19 Vaccine Boosters

Staying up-to-date with your COVID-19 vaccines offers the best ongoing protection. COVID-19 vaccine boosters can give you extra protection against serious illness from COVID-19. An updated booster is now available for people age 12 years and older to boost protection against the very contagious strain of COVID-19 currently circulating. Children ages 5 years through 11 years, with permission from a parent or legal guardian, can continue to boost their protection with another dose of the original COVID-19 vaccine, when eligible. Here are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about COVID-19 vaccine boosters.

Q: Why do I need a COVID-19 booster?
A: COVID-19 vaccines reduce the risk for serious illness and hospitalization from COVID-19. But that protection weakens over time. A booster can help keep you protected longer.

Q: How are the new boosters different from the original COVID-19 vaccines?
A: The new boosters made by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna are bivalent boosters. This means they are made to build immunity against the original COVID-19 strain <u>plus</u> the newer and highly contagious COVID-19 strain currently circulating (the Omicron variant). This provides broader overall protection, and stronger protection against the Omicron variant.

Q: When should I get a booster dose?
A: People age 12 years and older can receive a booster dose <u>at least</u> two months after the primary series (Pfizer, Moderna or Novavax), initial dose (Johnson & Johnson/Janssen), or their last booster dose. Children ages 5-11 years can continue to boost their protection with another dose of the original COVID-19 vaccine at least five months after the primary series (Pfizer-BioNTech primary series recipients only).

Q: Which booster dose should I get? The new booster or the old booster?
A: These updated boosters made by Pfizer and Moderna are now ***the only*** booster options available for people 12 years old and older. Adolescents and teens ages 12 through 17 years can only receive the Pfizer booster, and adults can choose either the Pfizer or Moderna booster. Children ages 5-11 years with a completed Pfizer-BioNTech series can continue to boost their protection with another dose of the original COVID-19 vaccine (monovalent) when eligible.

Q: Why can't my 10-year-old get the new updated booster?
A: The bivalent booster dose is only authorized for 12 years and older. COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers are expected to submit requests for updated boosters for younger children soon.

Q: I'm 65 years old. Will I still need a second booster dose after this booster?
A: <u>Moving forward, everyone who is eligible for a booster will only need one booster dose.</u> This new recommendation is regardless of the number of previous doses received, or individual risk factors such as age or medical condition.

Q: If I recently had COVID-19, when should I get a booster shot?
A: Getting a COVID-19 booster gives most people a high level of protection against COVID-19 even in people who have already been sick with COVID-19. If you have COVID-19 or recently had COVID-19, you can get your next dose after your symptoms have improved and your isolation period is over or you can choose to delay your next dose for three months.

Q: If most people have had or will probably get COVID-19, why are the vaccines necessary?
A: The goal of the vaccines has always been to prevent serious illness from COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccination significantly lowers your risk of severe illness, including hospitalization, if you get infected. Compared to people who are up-to-date with their COVID-19 vaccinations, unvaccinated people are more likely to get COVID-19, and much more likely to be hospitalized with COVID-19. People who are vaccinated can get infected or reinfected with COVID-19, but most often experience milder symptoms.

Q: If we need to keep getting booster doses, does this mean the COVID-19 vaccines are not working?
A: The COVID-19 vaccines work well to lower risk of severe illness, including hospitalization from COVID-19. But that protection reduces over time. A booster dose can restore that protection. This is especially important for people who are higher risk for serious illness from

COVID-19 including people who are older or have underlying medical conditions.

Q: How long does protection from a COVID-19 vaccine last?
A: Scientists are monitoring how long COVID-19 vaccine protection lasts. COVID-19 vaccines work well to prevent severe illness and hospitalization. But protection decreases over time, especially for certain groups of people including people who are older or who have weakened immune systems or certain medical conditions. Booster doses help restore protection. The CDC continues to review evidence and updates guidance as new information becomes available.

Q: Can I get a booster dose of a different vaccine than I initially received?
A: A COVID-19 booster dose does not have to match the vaccine given for the primary series. Some people may prefer the vaccine type originally received, and others may choose to get a different booster. Adults (18+) can choose the Pfizer or Moderna booster. Youth (12-17) can receive the Pfizer booster only.

Q: Can I get a flu shot at the same time as my COVID-19 booster?
A: Yes. You can get a COVID-19 vaccine and a flu vaccine at the same time. Getting both vaccines is important for prevention of severe illness, especially heading into fall and winter when respiratory illnesses increase.

Q: Are the side effects worse for the booster?
A: People may have some side effects from a COVID-19 booster, just like the original vaccine, including pain, redness or swelling at the injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever, and nausea. These are normal and signs the vaccine is working. Serious side effects are rare, but may occur.

Q: What does "up to date" on COVID-19 vaccinations mean?
A: People are best protected from COVID-19, just like other diseases, when they stay up-to-date with vaccinations. A person is up-to-date with their COVID-19 vaccinations if they have received all doses in the primary series and all boosters recommended, when eligible.

Q: Where can I get a booster dose?
A: Vaccines are widely available at many locations across the state, including local health departments, pediatricians, family physicians, community health centers, adult and children's hospitals, and pharmacies. Ohioans are encouraged to call their provider for more information or visit gettheshot.coronavirus.ohio.gov or call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634) to locate a provider or make an appointment.

Q: How much does a booster dose cost?
A: There is no out-of-pocket cost for a COVID-19 vaccine. You do not need to pay or have health insurance to get a booster. If you do have health insurance, your provider may ask for your insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid information because providers can charge an administration fee to insurance.

Q: Do I need to bring my COVID-19 vaccine card to my appointment? What if I lost it?
A: Ohioans are encouraged to bring their existing COVID-19 vaccine card to be updated. If you cannot find your vaccine card, you should first contact your original vaccine provider to see if they can locate your records. If they are unable to assist, please contact your local health department. If they are unable to assist, please review this information on how to mail a request for your vaccination recordsto the Ohio Department of Health. You will not be able to obtain a new vaccine card through the Ohio Department of Health, but you will be able to access your vaccination records. If you do not have your card, you can still get your booster dose.

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For additional information, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

For answers to your COVID-19 questions, call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1- 833-427-5634).

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. If you or a loved one are experiencing anxiety related to the coronavirus pandemic, help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call the COVID-19 CareLine at 1-800-720-9616.