Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

COVID-19

COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Shots

Updated Feb. 2, 2022

Choosing Your COVID-19 Booster Shot

Three COVID-19 vaccines are authorized or approved for use in the United States to prevent COVID-19. Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna (COVID-19 mRNA vaccines) are preferred. You may get Johnson & Johnson's Janssen COVID-19 vaccine in some situations.

Who Can Get a Booster Shot

IF YOU RECEIVED

Pfizer-BioNTech

Who should get a booster:
Everyone 12 years and older

When to get a booster:
At least 5 months after completing your primary COVID-19 vaccination series

Which booster should you get?
Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna (mRNA COVID-19 vaccines) are preferred in most* situations

Teens 12–17 years old may only get a Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine booster

IF YOU RECEIVED

Moderna

Who should get a booster:
Adults 18 years and older

When to get a booster:
At least 5 months after completing your primary COVID-19 vaccination series

Which booster should you get?
Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna (mRNA COVID-19 vaccines) are preferred in most* situations

IF YOU RECEIVED

Johnson & Johnson's Janssen*

Who should get a booster:
Adults 18 years and older

When to get a booster:
At least 2 months after receiving your J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccination

Which booster should you get?
Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna (mRNA COVID-19 vaccines) are preferred in most* situations

*Although mRNA vaccines are preferred, J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine may be considered in some situations.

Scheduling Your Booster Shot

If you need help scheduling your booster shot, contact the location that set up your previous appointment. If you need to get your booster shot in a location different from where you received your previous shot, there are several ways you can find a vaccine provider.

> **Find a COVID-19 vaccine or booster:** Search vaccines.gov, text your ZIP code to 438829, or call 1-800-232-0233 to find locations near you.

What to Expect during and after Your Booster Shot Appointment

- Bring your CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Record card to your booster shot appointment so your provider can fill in the information about your booster dose. If you did not receive a card at your first appointment, contact the vaccination site where you got your first shot or your state health department to find out how you can get a card.
- You may experience side effects after getting a COVID-19 vaccine. These are normal signs that your body is building protection against COVID-19.
- If you have enrolled in **v-safe,** enter your booster shot in your **v-safe** account, the system will send you daily health check-ins. You will be able tell CDC about any side effects.
- A person is considered "boosted" and up to date right after getting their booster dose.

If You Were Vaccinated Outside of the United States

If you completed a Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, or J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine primary series outside of the United States you should follow the guidance above for booster shots.

Otherwise, if you were vaccinated abroad with other COVID-19 vaccines you can get a booster shot if you are 12 years or older and you either:

- Received all the recommended doses of a World Health Organization emergency use listing (WHO-EUL) COVID-19 vaccine , not approved or authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- Or completed a mix and match series composed of any combination of FDA-approved, FDA-authorized, or WHO-EUL COVID-19 vaccines

If you meet the above requirements you can get a single booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine at least 5 months after getting all recommended doses or completing a mix and match COVID-19 vaccine series.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do booster shots use the same ingredients as existing vaccines?

Yes. COVID-19 booster shots are the same ingredients (formulation) as the current COVID-19 vaccines. However, in the case of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine booster shot, the dose is half of the amount of the vaccine people get for their primary series.

If we need a booster shot, are the vaccines working?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines are working well to prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death. However, public health experts are starting to see reduced protection over time against mild and moderate disease, especially among certain populations.

What are the risks to getting a booster shot?

Adults and children may have some side effects from a COVID-19 vaccine, including pain, redness or swelling at the injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever and nausea. Serious side effects are rare, but may occur.

Am I still considered “fully vaccinated” if I don’t get a booster shot?

Yes, the definition of fully vaccinated has not changed and does not include the booster shot. Everyone is still considered fully vaccinated two weeks after their second dose in a two-shot series, such as the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines, or two weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as the J&J/Janssen vaccine. Fully vaccinated, however is not the same as optimally protected. To be optimally protected, a person needs to get a booster shot when and if eligible.

Does the definition of “up to date” include a booster shot?

It depends. Everyone is considered up to date until the time they are eligible for a booster – which is 5 months after the second dose in a two-shot series, (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines), or two months after the J&J/Janssen vaccine. After this time period, a booster shot is recommended and a person is no longer up to date on their recommended COVID vaccination. In order to be up to date, a person would need to get a booster shot to be considered up to date.

Data Supporting Need for a Booster Shot

Studies show after getting vaccinated against COVID-19, protection against the virus and the ability to prevent infection with variants may decrease over time and due to changes in variants.

- Although COVID-19 vaccines remain effective in preventing severe disease, recent data [1 MB, 68 pages] suggest their effectiveness at preventing infection or severe illness wanes over time, especially in people ages 65 years and older.
- The recent emergence of the Omicron variant further emphasizes the importance of vaccination, boosters, and prevention efforts needed to protect against COVID-19.
- Data from clinical trials showed that a booster shot increased the immune response in trial participants who finished a Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna primary series 6 months earlier or who received a J&J/Janssen single-dose vaccine 2 months earlier. With an increased immune response, people should have improved protection against getting infected with

COVID-19. For Pfizer-BioNTech and J&J/Janssen, clinical trials also showed that a booster shot helped prevent severe disease.

Related Pages

- COVID-19 Vaccine Safety and Monitoring
- Understanding How COVID-19 Vaccines Work
- Ensuring COVID-19 Vaccines Work
- Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination
- COVID-19 Vaccines for Moderately to Severely Immunocompromised People

For Healthcare and Public Health

Considerations for Use of a COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Dose

More Information

ACIP Presentation Slides, December 16, 2021

ACIP Presentation Slides, November 19, 2021

ACIP Presentation Slides, October 21, 2021

ACIP Presentation Slides, September 22–23, 2021

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