



## COVID-19

# COVID-19 Vaccine Boosters

Updated Apr. 14, 2022

### What You Need to Know

- As with vaccines for other diseases, people are best protected against infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 when they [stay up to date with vaccinations](#).
- COVID-19 vaccines continue to protect people from getting seriously ill, being hospitalized, and even dying—especially people who have received a booster.
- CDC recommends everyone ages 12 years and older receive a COVID-19 vaccine booster after completing their primary COVID-19 vaccination series. Some people can receive two boosters.
- People who are moderately or severely immunocompromised have specific COVID-19 vaccine recommendations, including recommendations for a booster. Learn more about [COVID-19 vaccine recommendations for people who are moderately or severely immunocompromised](#).

## Choosing Your COVID-19 Booster

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

### PRIMARY SERIES COVID-19 VACCINE

#### Pfizer-BioNTech

---

#### Who should get one booster:

Everyone 12 years and older

#### Who can get a second booster:

Adults 50 years and older

#### When to get your booster:

At least 5 months after completing your primary COVID-19 vaccination series

If eligible for a second booster, at least 4 months after your first booster

#### Which booster should you get?

- Adults 18 years and older should get an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna) for the first booster in most\* situations
- The second booster must be an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine
- Teens 12–17 years old may only get a Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine booster

#### PRIMARY SERIES COVID-19 VACCINE

### Moderna

---

#### **Who should get one booster:**

Adults 18 years and older

#### **Who can get a second booster:**

Adults 50 years and older

#### **When to get your booster:**

At least 5 months after completing your primary COVID-19 vaccination series

If eligible for a second booster, at least 4 months after your first booster

#### **Which booster should you get?**

For the first booster, an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna) is preferred in most\* situations

The second booster must be an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine

#### PRIMARY SERIES COVID-19 VACCINE

### Johnson & Johnson's Janssen\*

---

#### **Who should get a booster:**

Adults 18 years and older

#### **Who can get a second booster:**

Anyone who received a J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine for both their primary dose and booster

Adults 50 years and older who first received a J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine, regardless of what type of booster they received

#### **When to get a booster:**

At least 2 months after receiving your J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccination

If eligible for a second booster, at least 4 months after your first booster

#### **Which booster should you get?**

For the first booster, an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna) is preferred in most\* situations

The second booster must be an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine

\*Although mRNA vaccines are preferred for the first booster, J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine [may be considered in some situations](#).

## Scheduling Your Booster

If you need help scheduling your booster, contact the location that set up your previous appointment. If you need to get your booster in a location different from where you received your previous vaccination, 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 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 dose 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 dose](#) in your [v-safe](#) account, the system will send you daily health check-ins. You will be able to tell CDC about any side effects.
- A person is considered “boosted” and [up to date](#) right after getting their first booster. Getting a second booster is not necessary to be considered up to date at this time.

## 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 boosters.

Otherwise, if you were vaccinated abroad with other COVID-19 vaccines, you can get a booster 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 of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna) at least 5 months after getting all recommended doses or completing a mix and match COVID-19 vaccine series.

## Frequently Asked Questions

[Do boosters use the same ingredients as existing vaccines?](#) ▼

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

[If we need a booster, 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? ∨

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? ∨

Yes, the definition of fully vaccinated has not changed and does not include a booster. Everyone is still considered fully vaccinated two weeks after their second dose in a two-dose series, such as the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, or two weeks after the single-dose J&J/Janssen vaccine. Fully vaccinated, however, is not the same as having the best protection. People are best protected when they [stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations](#), which includes getting one booster when eligible.

---

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

It depends. Everyone ages 12 years and older is considered up to date until the time they are eligible for their first booster — which is 5 months after the second dose for Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, or two months after the J&J/Janssen vaccine. After this time period, they need to get 1 booster to be considered up to date. Getting a second booster is not necessary to be considered up to date at this time.

---


### If I have received a J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine and a J&J/Janssen COVID-19 booster, are additional boosters recommended? ∨

People (except those who are [moderately or severely immunocompromised](#)) who first received a J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine and got it again for their booster may also receive a booster of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna). Get the mRNA booster at least 4 months after the most recent J&J/Janssen booster.

---

## Data Supporting Need for a Booster

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 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 an mRNA booster 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 a serious COVID-19 infection.
- One CDC study found that adults who received the J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine as both their primary and booster had lower levels of protection against COVID-19-associated emergency department and urgent care visits during Omicron compared to adults who received an mRNA COVID-19 booster.

## 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](#)

Last Updated Apr. 14, 2022