

Frequently Asked Questions

COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Doses

A booster dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech/Comirnaty COVID-19 vaccine can be given to a limited group of people at the highest risk for severe COVID-19 based on age or underlying medical conditions to maximize ongoing protection against COVID-19. Here are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about COVID-19 vaccine booster doses.

Q: Who is eligible to receive a COVID-19 booster dose of the Pfizer vaccine?

A: Booster doses of the Pfizer/Comirnaty COVID-19 vaccine are now available for the following populations at least six months after completion of the primary Pfizer series, meaning at least six months after your second dose:

- People 65 years and older or residents in long-term care settings **SHOULD** receive a booster shot.
- People ages 50 to 64 with [certain underlying medical conditions](#) **SHOULD** receive a booster shot.
- People ages 18 to 49 with [certain underlying medical conditions](#) **MAY** receive a booster shot based on their individual benefits and risks. The CDC has indicated that this is a determination made by the vaccine recipient, but those eligible are encouraged to talk to their healthcare providers if they have any questions.
- People age 18 and older who are at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of their job or living in an institutional setting **MAY** receive a booster shot based on their individual benefits and risks. The CDC has indicated that this is a determination made by the vaccine recipient.

At this time, booster doses are authorized only for fully vaccinated Pfizer vaccine recipients who are at high-risk for exposure to COVID-19 or the complications from severe disease.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will review data and determine if and when booster doses are needed by each COVID-19 vaccine product. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will offer guidance for booster dose use. Right now, recipients of the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines do not need booster doses, but this could change based on ongoing evaluation.

Immunocompromised individuals who meet [certain, specific criteria](#) and received an mRNA vaccine (either Pfizer or Moderna), are [already eligible for a third dose](#) in their main primary series to strengthen their initial vaccine response. This additional dose should not be confused with a booster dose, which is used to strengthen waning immunity and bolster protection against serious outcomes including hospitalization and death.

Q: Why are booster doses available for only the Pfizer vaccine?

A: The need for and timing of booster doses for the COVID-19 vaccines is determined by product, and there are multiple steps required for authorization and use of a booster dose. Before a booster dose can be given, the FDA and CDC must complete a rigorous review of applications from each manufacturer, including data on safety, effectiveness and immunity over time, to determine if and when booster doses are needed, and for which populations, following completion of a primary series. At this time, those steps are complete for the Pfizer/Comirnaty vaccine, with ongoing evaluation to possibly expand eligibility to more Pfizer recipients in the future.

Q: Can I get a Pfizer booster dose if I received another COVID-19 vaccine but meet the risk-based criteria?

A: No. A booster dose should be the same as the primary vaccine series. COVID-19 vaccine products are not interchangeable. Data on the safety and efficacy of a mixed-product series are limited. A booster dose should be given with the same product. The FDA and CDC will determine if and when booster doses are needed for the Moderna or the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines.

Q: I received the Pfizer vaccine, but the list above says I'm not eligible. Why can't I get a booster dose, too?

A: At this time, booster doses of the Pfizer vaccine have been authorized only for individuals who are at high-risk for exposure to COVID-19 or the complications from severe disease. This authorization follows a rigorous review of available safety, effectiveness, and immunity data. Those eligible include Pfizer recipients either age 65 and older, ages 50-64 with underlying medical conditions, or ages 18-49 with underlying medical conditions based on individual benefits and risks, and those ages 18-64 who are in an occupational or institutional setting where the burden of COVID-19 infection and risk transmission are high. Booster doses are not recommended for any youth or adolescents at this time, with the exception of [immunocompromised individuals for whom a third dose of an mRNA vaccine is recommended](#) to complete the primary vaccine series.

Q: If we need booster doses, does this mean the COVID-19 vaccines are no longer effective?

A: No. The COVID-19 vaccines continue to be remarkably effective at reducing risk of severe disease, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19, and continue to offer protection against the widely circulating Delta variant. Protection against severe illness and death was the original goal of vaccines. A booster dose could help fully vaccinated people at greater risk maintain the highest protection over time and against variant strains, including the highly contagious Delta variant.

Q: Why have some people been getting a third COVID-19 dose early?

A: Both the Pfizer and Moderna messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines require two doses for full effectiveness for most people. For a very small percentage of people (approximately 3% of Ohioans and the U.S. population) who are immunocompromised, a third dose of mRNA vaccine is now recommended. This recommendation applies to people who have moderately or severely weakened immune systems and may have insufficient response to a two-dose vaccine regimen. This is not a booster dose to address waning immunity. The additional dose is a three-dose primary series for people with conditions or undergoing treatments that may cause moderate to severe immune system compromise and therefore a weaker initial response. These conditions include, but are not limited to:

- Active treatment for a solid-tumor cancer or a blood, bone marrow, or lymph cancer.
- Receipt of a solid organ transplant and use of related immunosuppressive drugs.
- Receipt within the past two years of a CAR-T-cell transplant or taking related immunosuppressive drugs.
- Receipt within the past two years of a hematopoietic stem cell (bone marrow) transplant or taking related immunosuppressive drugs.
- Moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency.
- Advanced or untreated HIV.
- Active treatment with any of the following:
 - High-dose corticosteroids.
 - Alkylating agents.
 - Antimetabolites.
 - Transplant-related immunosuppressive drugs.
 - Chemotherapy treatments classified as severely immunosuppressive.
 - Tumor necrosis factor (TNF) blockers.
 - A biologic agent that is immunosuppressive or immunomodulatory.

At this time, those third doses are recommended for recipients of the messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines (Pfizer/Comirnaty and Moderna). The recommendation for an additional dose does not apply to recipients of the single-dose viral vector Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine at this time; scientists are continuing to evaluate the vaccines effectiveness over time to determine if and when any additional doses might be needed.

Q: I'm eligible. Where can I get a booster dose?

A: Ohio's more than 3,500 enrolled COVID-19 vaccine providers are offering boosters to eligible Ohioans. There are many opportunities in Ohio to be vaccinated, including at pharmacies, federally qualified health centers, doctor's offices, community vaccination sites, and local health departments. There is ample supply of vaccine for boosters, as well as first and second doses, for Ohioans. Ohioans will be able to check gettheshot.coronavirus.ohio.gov for the latest eligibility information and to find a vaccine provider near them. Eligible booster recipients will be asked to attest they have one of the qualifying conditions, but specific proof will not be required. Specifically, eligible Ohioans will be able to visit the following types of providers to be vaccinated:

- **Long-term care facility or congregate living residents and staff** – Facilities will administer vaccines to residents and staff, specifically, nursing homes and assisted living facilities will utilize Ohio's COVID-19 Vaccine Maintenance Program, and state-owned institutional settings and veterans homes will vaccinate eligible staff and residents.

- **Other eligible Ohioans not listed above** – Eligible Ohioans can find a provider and schedule an appointment at gettheshot.coronavirus.ohio.gov.
 - Most pharmacies will offer either walk-in or scheduled appointments.
 - Local health departments in some of our largest cities will offer special community vaccination sites, and health departments in virtually every county are prepared to offer booster doses, including to homebound individuals.
 - Community health centers and participating primary care providers will also offer booster doses.

If you are eligible, please allow 2-3 weeks to get your booster dose. There will be many opportunities to be vaccinated in your community, whether you walk in to get your third dose or make an appointment with a nearby provider.

Q: Do I have to get my booster at the same place where I received the original vaccine series? What if it isn't open anymore?

A: No, you do not need to visit the same vaccine provider for your booster dose. Some providers, such as the Wolstein Center mass vaccination site, will not be in operation for booster doses. Eligible Ohioans who are not being vaccinated in a long-term care or work setting can choose to receive their COVID-19 at any vaccine provider statewide. To find a provider near you, visit gettheshot.coronavirus.ohio.gov or call 1-833-427-5634.

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 records to the Ohio Department of Health](#). You will not be able to obtain a new vaccine card by request, but will be able to access your vaccination records. If you do not have your card, you can still get your booster dose.

Q: Are booster doses for the Pfizer or the Comirnaty vaccine?

A: Comirnaty is another name for the fully approved Pfizer vaccine. They are two names for the same product.

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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.