



# What Are COVID-19 Boosters?

**Many vaccines require a booster. This one helps keep your immune system strong against COVID-19.**

**If you received a COVID-19 vaccine, you are still protected.** To help extend that protection, booster shots are now authorized for some who received the Pfizer vaccine, including those 65 and older and those at higher risk for severe COVID-19. You can get a booster dose at least six months after your last shot.

## **Q Who should get a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine booster?**

A single Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine booster dose is recommended for people in certain groups, at least six months after their last shot. That includes those who are:

- **65 and older.**
- **Residents 18 and older in long-term care settings.**
- **50 to 64 with underlying medical conditions.**

People in other groups may receive a booster shot of the Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine at least six months after their last shot. That includes those who are:

- **18 to 49 with underlying medical conditions.**
- **18 to 64 who are at increased risk for exposure to COVID-19 and transmission because of occupational or institutional setting.**

## **Q Does the recommendation for a booster dose mean that the vaccines are not working?**

No, they're still working! All COVID-19 vaccines prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death, even against the Delta variant; however, public health experts are starting to see reduced protection against mild and moderate disease — especially among certain populations.

## **Q Why is the recommendation that some individuals “should” get a booster dose, while others “may” get a booster dose?**

Compared with the general population, certain people are at increased risk for severe illness or exposure from COVID 19: those 18 to 49 who have underlying medical conditions, and those 18 to 64 whose living or working situation means they might be more exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19. Based on data, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) deemed these groups are eligible for the booster and recommends that individuals decide whether to get the booster based on their individual benefits and risk factors. This recommendation may change in the future as more data become available.

Talk to your healthcare provider if you are unsure of whether or not to get the booster. At higher risk for severe illness are those who are 65 and older, those who are 50 and older who have underlying medical conditions, or people who live in long-term care settings.

## Q What's the difference between an additional COVID-19 vaccine dose and a booster dose?

- An additional dose (or **3rd dose**) of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) is now recommended for people with a weak immune system 28 days after their second dose. This is because their initial immune response after a 2-dose series may not have been strong enough to protect them. This is part of the primary series.
- A **booster dose** of a vaccine is recommended when a person's initial immune response is likely to have decreased over time, and is currently recommended for at least 6 months after the primary series for certain people who received the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.

## Q What are examples of underlying medical conditions that may increase the risk of severe COVID-19?

Examples include:

- Cancer
- Cerebrovascular disease
- Chronic kidney disease
- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Diabetes
- Heart conditions (heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies)
- Obesity
- Pregnancy and recent pregnancy
- Smoking, current and former

## Q What are examples of people who may benefit from a booster because their living or working situation increases their risk of illness?

Examples include:

- **First responders** (e.g., healthcare workers, firefighters, police, congregate care staff)
  - **Education staff** (e.g., teachers, support staff, daycare workers)
  - **Food and agriculture workers**
  - **Manufacturing workers**
  - **Corrections workers**
  - **U.S. Postal Service workers**
  - **Public transit workers**
  - **Grocery store workers**
- Those who live in a congregate setting (e.g., homeless shelter, correctional facility)

## Q Are there side effects associated with the booster dose?

Reactions reported after the Pfizer booster dose were similar to that of the two-shot primary series, most often, pain at the injection site, and fatigue. Most side effects were mild to moderate.

As with the two-shot primary series, serious side effects are rare. The risks of myocarditis and pericarditis after a third dose of mRNA vaccines are unknown at this time. For many who have received two shots of the Pfizer vaccine, the benefits of getting a booster shot outweigh the known and potential risks.