

VACCINATIONS FOR ALL

COVID-19 Booster Shots

Frequently Asked Questions

The COVID-19 booster shot is recommended for everyone 12 years of age or older who received their second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines five months ago or more, or those who received the single dose Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine two months ago or more.

What is a booster shot?

A booster shot is an additional dose of a vaccine after completing a vaccine series and is used to boost immunity against the virus as protection may have decreased over time (this is called waning immunity).

Who can get a booster shot?

5 months after receiving the second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, everyone 12 years or older should get a booster shot.

2 months or more after receiving the single dose J&J vaccine, everyone 18 years or older should get a booster shot.

Why is a booster shot recommended?

The COVID-19 vaccines are still very effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalization and death due to COVID-19. However, some studies show that protection against infection from the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines may start to decrease after about

5 months or after about 2 months from the J&J vaccine. A booster shot may provide extra protection to people who are at increased risk of COVID-19 exposure or severe COVID-19 illness, especially with the presence of the Delta variant circulating in our communities.

Which medical conditions increase the risk of severe COVID-19 illness?

Medical conditions that increase the risk of severe COVID-19 include diabetes, heart conditions, chronic kidney disease, chronic lung disease, liver disease, cancer, dementia, HIV and pregnancy. For a complete list see: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html)

Who is at increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 in their workplace or another setting?

Jobs that may increase the risk of exposure to COVID-19 include health care workers, teachers, day care staff, and restaurant and grocery store workers. Other settings where there may be increased risk of exposure include homeless shelters and prisons.

How do I know if I need a booster shot?

Talk to your health care provider if you have questions about whether you should get a booster shot. If you need help finding a provider, call 311 or call 212-COVID-19 (212-268-4319) and speak with a nurse to learn if you are eligible.

Can people who are pregnant, nursing or trying to get pregnant get a booster?

Pregnant and recently pregnant people are at increased risk for developing severe illness from COVID-19 compared with non-pregnant people. Pregnant people should be vaccinated against COVID-19. If pregnant people meet the eligibility criteria, they should receive a booster.

What are the risks of getting a booster shot?

For many people who have received two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines or a single dose of the J&J vaccine, the benefits of getting a booster shot outweigh any risks. So far, reactions reported after getting a booster shot were similar to those after the initial doses. Tiredness and arm soreness were the most commonly reported side effects. Most side effects were mild to moderate.

Is the booster shot the same vaccine as the first two doses?

Yes. The booster shot is the same vaccine as each of the first two Pfizer or Moderna doses, or the single J&J dose. The dose for the Moderna booster, however, is half as much as what is administered for the first two doses.

Does the brand of my booster shot need to be the same brand of vaccine I first received?

Vaccinated people should try to get the same vaccine they initially received as their booster, but they have the choice to switch to either of the other two vaccine types.

When should I get a booster shot?

If you are 12 years of age or older, you should get a booster shot 5 months after you received your second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines. If you are 18 years of age or older and received the single dose of the J&J vaccine, you should get a booster shot 2 months after your initial dose.

If we need a booster shot, does that mean that the vaccines aren't working?

No. COVID-19 vaccines are working well to prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death, even against the widely circulating Delta variant. However, public health experts are starting to see mild reductions in protection, especially among certain populations.

Where can I get a free booster shot?

Pfizer and J&J booster shots are available at the 11 hospitals in the NYC Health + Hospitals system. Moderna booster shots are available at any NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health site. You do not need to go to the same location where you got your first two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or single dose of the J&J vaccine. Walk in to any NYC Health + Hospitals acute care hospital or NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health site for your booster or call 1-877-829-4692 for help in many languages.

Can I get a booster shot at the same time as other vaccines (such as the flu vaccine)?

Yes. It is safe to get a booster shot at the same time as other vaccines, or any time before or after. If you have not yet gotten your flu shot, both are available at NYC Health + Hospitals acute care hospital locations.

Do I need a booster shot to be fully vaccinated?

No. People are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after the second dose of a two-dose vaccine (such as Pfizer or Moderna) or two weeks after the single-dose J&J vaccine.

Will booster shots be mandated?

The New York State vaccination mandate for health care workers only applies to first and second doses. The mandate does not include booster shots.

Are booster shots recommended for children?

At this time, everyone aged 12 and older is encouraged to receive a booster shot. People ages 12-17 who previously got the Pfizer primary series more than 5 months ago are eligible for the Pfizer booster shot only. Certain immunocompromised children ages 5-11 may receive an additional dose of the Pfizer vaccine 28 days after their second shot.