

## COVID-19 Bivalent Booster Vaccine FAQs

### 1. Is getting a booster necessary? Everyone seems to have had COVID — CDC estimates that 95% of people over 16 have had some form of COVID-19. Do we really need another shot?

- The bivalent boosters target the highly contagious Omicron subvariants that are currently circulating in the United States — BA.4 and BA.5.
- Previous COVID-19 infection can provide some immunity, but that immunity wanes quickly. For people who have recovered from COVID-19 infection, getting the bivalent booster provides added protection.
- The best way for people to protect themselves against serious illness, hospitalization and death is to be up to date with COVID vaccinations. Now, that means getting the bivalent booster when eligible.
- Going into the fall and winter — when there tend to be higher rates of respiratory illnesses — getting vaccinated and receiving an updated booster is something everyone can do to protect themselves.

### 2. Who should get the bivalent booster?

- Bivalent boosters are recommended for everyone ages 12 and older who has already been vaccinated or received an earlier version of the COVID-19 booster.

### 3. Should children get the bivalent booster?

- Everyone who is eligible should get the bivalent booster. Bivalent boosters were authorized and recommended for everyone ages 12 and older on September 1.
- On October 12, FDA and CDC authorized bivalent boosters for children ages 5-11.
  - Children and teens ages 5-17 can receive the Pfizer-BioNTech bivalent booster.
  - Children and teens ages 6-17 can receive the Moderna bivalent booster.
- Children who have not yet received any COVID-19 vaccines should get vaccinated — everyone ages 6 months and older is eligible to be vaccinated.

- Being sick with COVID-19 can lead to disruptions in schooling and activities, and it can potentially infect adults and other family members. COVID-19 can cause severe illness in children.

#### **4. When should I get the bivalent booster?**

- You can get the bivalent booster if it's been at least 2 months since your last COVID-19 vaccine.
- If you haven't been vaccinated against COVID-19 yet, don't wait! There are many COVID-19 vaccines available in the United States. Hundreds of millions of people have been vaccinated.

#### **5. What if I recently had COVID-19? Do I still need an updated booster?**

- Everyone should get the bivalent booster, even people who have had COVID-19. Previous COVID-19 infection can provide some immunity, but that immunity wanes quickly. For people who have recovered from COVID-19 infection, getting the bivalent booster provides added protection.
- After having COVID-19, you may want to wait 3 months before getting the bivalent booster. Talk to your medical provider about the best timing for you.

#### **6. Which brand of booster should I get?**

- People should get the bivalent booster that is conveniently available to them, regardless of the vaccine brand you originally received. The bivalent booster brands, Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, are very similar.
- The Pfizer-BioNTech bivalent booster is the only brand authorized for teens ages 12-17.

#### **7. How do we know the bivalent booster is safe and effective?**

- The bivalent booster was developed based on the existing COVID-19 vaccines — vaccines that have prevented serious illness and death, and that hundreds of millions of people in the United States have already safely received.
- There are many vaccines that are “multivalent” — they target two or more strains of a virus. The annual flu vaccine is a multivalent vaccine.
- The new COVID-19 bivalent boosters target two strains of COVID-19.

## **8. Does the bivalent booster increase the risk of cardiac-related death?**

- No, the bivalent booster does not increase the risk of cardiac-related death. There is no credible scientific evidence to date that COVID-19 vaccines cause heart-related deaths in men or women.

## **9. I am immunocompromised, or I regularly spend time with someone who is immunocompromised. What should I do to protect myself and those around me?**

- The best thing you can do to protect yourself and people around you who are immunocompromised is to be up to date with your COVID-19 vaccinations. That includes getting the bivalent booster when you are eligible.
- Continue to practice good hand hygiene and wear well-fitting masks.
- If you don't feel well, or if you have any symptoms, stay home.
- People who are immunocompromised should avoid poorly ventilated or crowded indoor settings.

## **10. Where can I get a bivalent booster?**

- Visit [Vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) to find a location near you.

## **11. Is there a fee for the bivalent booster?**

- There is no fee for the bivalent booster. The vaccine site may ask for your insurance card, but you should not be charged any fees.

## **12. Can I get my annual flu shot and the COVID-19 vaccine or booster at the same time?**

- It is safe for people to get their flu vaccines and their COVID-19 vaccines at the same time.

## **13. Is the pandemic over?**

- The COVID-19 pandemic in 2022 looks very different from the early days — in addition to vaccines, there are multiple therapeutic options and a better understanding of the virus and the disease.
- Unfortunately, 400-500 Americans are still dying every day from COVID-19 and people are still being hospitalized. Vaccines, including the recently authorized bivalent boosters, can prevent serious illnesses and death.
- Data show, however, that rates of vaccination are uneven. For example, among children under 5, fewer than 325,000 kids are fully vaccinated. To date, uptake of the bivalent boosters has been slow.

- Now is not the time to be complacent. Get vaccinated and boosted.

#### **14. What are credible sources of scientific information about COVID-19?**

- The [COVID-19 Real-Time Learning Network](#) is a resource for the frontline health care community. Resources and research on the COVID-19 Real-Time Learning Network is curated by infectious diseases experts and the site is updated regularly.