

# NEW COVID-19 BOOSTERS

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

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### Why do we need to update boosters?

Boosters are an important defense, even if you've already had COVID. The COVID vaccine formula has not been changed since the beginning of the pandemic. An updated formula is necessary to continue to protect us.

The new variants of the COVID-19 virus have gotten better at tricking our immunity. Almost all cases worldwide are caused by Omicron subvariants (BA.4 and BA.5) because they are so contagious. The original vaccines can protect against severe disease, but the goal for the updated booster is to provide better and longer protection against infection, especially as winter and flu season approach.

### How do the new boosters work?

The new boosters use the same mRNA technology as the original vaccines. They are **"bivalent"** which means they give us protection from both the original virus and the current Omicron variants (BA.4/BA.5). This should give us broader protection against COVID-19. Tweaking the vaccine formula in this way is the same as how the flu vaccine is altered each year to protect against the anticipated flu variants.

### Who is eligible for a new booster?

The CDC recommends that everyone who is eligible get an updated booster dose **at least 2 months after their last COVID-19 shot**—either since their last booster dose, or since completing their primary series. The new boosters are not to be used in people who have never received COVID-19 vaccination.

**Pfizer's** updated booster shot is recommended for individuals **5 and older**.

**Moderna's** updated booster shot is recommended for individuals **6 and older**.

Eligible individuals can get either the Pfizer or Moderna updated booster, regardless of whether their primary series or most recent dose was with Pfizer, Moderna, Novavax, or the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. [Learn more](#) about how to stay up to date on your vaccination.



## Are the new boosters effective?

The FDA considered several data points before approving the updated boosters. Human clinical trials of the updated booster are currently underway and data will help inform the best strategy forward in managing this disease. Evidence from [trials in mice](#) is promising and indicates that this booster may be more protective against the omicron subvariants than the original booster. The FDA also took into consideration human clinical trials and laboratory studies of both Pfizer and Moderna's initial version of a bivalent booster that included the original COVID virus and the first Omicron strain (BA.1). These trials showed a strong immune response and was shown to be safe. The FDA did not move forward with this initial bivalent booster because it wanted a BA.5 bivalent booster to offer individuals for best protection.

## Are the new boosters safe?

[The FDA](#) reviewed data and assessed safety before approving the new boosters for emergency use authorization (EUA). The updated boosters are very similar to the formula of the original vaccines, which were tested in humans and have been given to hundreds of millions of people. This kind of update is what is done to the flu vaccine every year. The flu vaccine doesn't include extensive human clinical trials, so that it can respond quickly to the expected variants each year.

## What about the old boosters?

The new bivalent booster replaces the existing monovalent vaccine booster, therefore, the monovalent vaccine will no longer be authorized for use as booster doses in people age 12 and up.

## What about boosters for kids under 12?

[Pfizer](#) is working on a booster for ages 6 months to 11 years. The [CDC expects](#) a booster for younger kids following later this year.

## Where can I get my booster shot?

To find a location to get your booster shot, use the MA [VaxFinder](#).

## Have more questions?

[Learn more.](#)

