

## **FAQs: COVID-19 Booster Vaccines**

### **Why are booster vaccines recommended? Is the vaccine not working?**

The vaccines continue to be very effective at preventing hospitalization and death from COVID-19. Data shows that the vaccines' effectiveness has started to lessen a little in preventing infections or getting COVID-19 if you are exposed to it. This is mostly in people who are higher risk and is likely due to several factors. Examples include differences in people's bodies building up and sustaining a strong immune response over time (or differences in people's ability to fight off COVID-19 if exposed) and how the Delta variant of the virus is much more contagious. Because of this new information, booster doses are now recommended to higher risk persons to help ensure they have ongoing protection.

Booster vaccines are normal in most vaccine series. Most childhood vaccines require boosters as the child gets older to make sure they remain protected and help "give a reminder" to the body's immune system.

### **Are booster vaccines different than the original COVID-19 vaccines?**

These booster vaccines are the same vaccine given in primary vaccine series (they are not a different formulation). The only exception is that for the Moderna booster where only half the usual dose is given for the booster.

### **Do I have to get a booster vaccine?**

No, booster vaccines are not required. It is recommended for people who are at higher risk to ensure they have ongoing protection. Higher risk means those who may be more likely to get exposed to COVID-19 because of where they work or live, more likely to get severely ill with COVID-19, and/or may have health problems that may make it more likely to need that "reminder" to the immune system.

### **Are booster doses required to be considered fully vaccinated?**

No. People are considered fully vaccinated once two weeks have passed after finishing the primary vaccine series. The primary vaccine series is still two doses of Moderna, two doses of Pfizer-BioNTech, or one dose of Johnson & Johnson. So this has not changed for anything where vaccination status may be important: getting into events, hospital visits, traveling, jobs, etc.

### **Do I have to bring proof of eligibility (or proof that I'm high risk) to get a booster vaccine?**

No, but you should bring your vaccine card to your appointment so it can be updated. Talk to your doctor if you have questions about whether or not to get a booster.

### **Does the booster vaccine have to be the same type or the same brand as what I got before?**

No. A single booster dose of any of the available COVID-19 vaccines can be given.

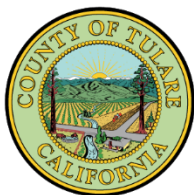
### **Which booster vaccine should I get?**

There is no specific guidance on mixing and matching booster vaccines or if getting one is better than another. The exception is that women of childbearing age (18-50yo) who got Johnson & Johnson vaccine should consider either Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna booster instead of another Johnson & Johnson (because these vaccines do not have the same risk of TTS—a rare clotting disorder that Johnson & Johnson has for women in this age group).

Persons may get a brand that is different from their primary series due to personal preference, their provider's advice, or whatever brand is available at the time. Primary vaccine series (e.g. the two Pfizers and the two Modernas) should still be with the same vaccine brand—the mixing and matching option is only for boosters.

### **Can minors get booster vaccines?**

No, booster doses have only been authorized for adults 18 and older. Some children may qualify for a third dose of Pfizer if they are severely immunocompromised and meet special criteria—talk with your family doctor if you are unsure.



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**Can I get a booster vaccine early?**

There is not an established benefit for getting a booster earlier than recommended. The timeframe for boosters is *at least* 6 months from the last mRNA vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna) or at least 2 months after the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

**Does the booster vaccine have side effects?**

The possible side effects are similar to the primary series vaccines. Common side effects include a sore arm, body aches, headaches, or fever/chills. If they occur, they are usually mild and go away on their own within a few days.

**Can I get a booster vaccine at the same time as a flu shot or other vaccine?**

Yes. You do not have to wait time between shots. Your arm may feel a little sorer if you get them in the same arm and/or you may feel a little more of the expected side effects.

**If I get a booster vaccine, can I stop wearing a mask?**

It is recommended all persons continue to wear masks when indoors around persons who are not in their household whether they are vaccinated or not. This is especially recommended for persons who are higher risk and those who live with higher risk persons (e.g. elderly persons, persons with health problems or weaker immune systems, etc.) to make sure they stay protected.

Currently in California, only unvaccinated persons are required to wear a mask indoors in most public settings. Masks are universally required in schools, healthcare, corrections, and some other settings.

**Do immunocompromised people get booster vaccines?**

Immunocompromised persons who received an additional dose of Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna (dose #3) are eligible for a booster vaccine 6 months after that dose. If you have questions, you should ask your family doctor or specialist.

**Should I bring my vaccine card to my appointment?**

Yes, bring your vaccine card so it can be updated.

**Where are booster vaccines available?**

Booster vaccines are available at any location where COVID-19 vaccines are available. All locations may not carry all vaccine types—persons should ask about availability when they make an appointment if they have a vaccine preference.

**Can I get a booster vaccine if I am pregnant or am wanting to become pregnant?**

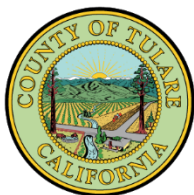
Yes and all eligible persons in the family including partners should be vaccinated too. Pregnant persons are more likely to get severely sick with COVID-19, so it is very important they are as protected as possible. Ask your OB-GYN if you have questions about the vaccine and your health.

**If I didn't get my second dose on time, can I still get the vaccine?**

Yes, it is OK to get your second dose of Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna even if it is more than 28 days from the first dose. It is important to get it ASAP so you can be as protected as possible. You would be eligible for a booster vaccine 6 months after your second dose.

**Should I get a vaccine if I have already had COVID-19?**

The vaccine is recommended regardless of whether you have had COVID-19 or not. It is unknown how long potential protection from infection may last and so far, data shows that vaccination may provide better protection than the infection. One CDC study showed that unvaccinated people who already had COVID-19 were more than 2 times likely to get COVID-19 again compared to fully vaccinated people.



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You should not get a COVID-19 vaccine if you were recently exposed or diagnosed with COVID-19; you should wait until quarantine or isolation is complete. You should also not get a COVID-19 vaccine if you received monoclonal antibody treatment within the last 90 days or if you or your child were diagnosed with MIS-C or MIS-A (complications from COVID-19 infection) within the last 90 days.

**Where can I go for more information?**

Centers for Disease Control, Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), and California Department of Public Health are good resources with a lot more information on vaccines and COVID-19.

-CDC and ACIP booster info: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html>

-CDPH booster Q&A: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Vaccine-Booster-QA.aspx>

	Pfizer-BioNTech	Moderna	Johnson & Johnson / Janssen
<b>Age</b>	12 yo+	18 yo+	18 yo+
<b>Dose 1</b>	Dose 1 of 2 (not protected yet)	Dose 1 of 2 (not protected yet)	Single dose <b>*fully vaccinated after 2 wks*</b>
<b>Dose 2</b>	at least 21 days from dose 1 <b>*fully vaccinated after 2 wks*</b>	at least 28 days from dose 1 <b>*fully vaccinated after 2 wks*</b>	---
<b>Dose 3</b>	<i>Immunocompromised only</i> at least 28 days from dose 2	<i>Immunocompromised only</i> at least 28 days from dose 2	---
<b>Booster Dose</b>	At least 6 months from last dose	At least 6 months from last dose	At least 2 months from last dose
<b>Booster recommended</b>	-65yo+ or; -18yo+ in long-term care or; -18yo+ with high-risk medical, social, or living conditions -18yo+ who work or live in high-risk settings	-65yo+ or; -18yo+ in long-term care or; -18yo+ with high-risk medical, social, or living conditions -18yo+ who work or live in high-risk settings	All persons 18yo+ who got J&J
<b>Booster dose</b>	Same as primary series: 0.3mL	Half-dose of primary series: 0.25mL	Same as primary series: 0.5mL
<b>Mix-and-match boosters</b>	No specific guidance on whether to get Pfizer, Moderna, or J&J booster.	No specific guidance on whether to get Pfizer, Moderna, or J&J booster.	Women of childbearing age should consider mRNA booster instead due to increased risk of TTS. Otherwise no specific guidance on whether to get Pfizer, Moderna, or J&J booster.
<b>FDA EUA for patients</b>	<a href="https://www.fda.gov/media/144414/download">https://www.fda.gov/media/144414/download</a>	<a href="https://www.fda.gov/media/144638/download">https://www.fda.gov/media/144638/download</a>	<a href="https://www.fda.gov/media/146305/download">https://www.fda.gov/media/146305/download</a>