

COVID-19 Booster Doses

What is a booster dose?

A booster dose is a dose of vaccine that is given after the initial completion of a vaccine series. Individuals have an adequate immune response after receiving their original vaccine series; however, that weakens over time. A booster dose is given to strengthen the immune response and prolong the protection provided by the vaccine.

Receiving booster doses is not a new practice. A majority of the United States public has likely received a booster dose of another routinely recommended vaccine (i.e., polio, tetanus) in their lifetime.

Who is recommended to receive a booster dose?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends a single booster dose of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine six months after completion of the initial Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine series for the following groups:

- People 65 and older
- Those living in long-term care facilities
- People ages 50-64 with [underlying medical conditions](#) (cancer, chronic kidney disease, chronic lung disease, dementia, diabetes, down syndrome, heart conditions, HIV, immunocompromised, liver disease, overweigh/obesity, pregnancy, sick cell disease, current or former smoker, solid organ/stem cell transport, stroke, substance use disorders)

The CDC also recommends that the following groups may receive a booster dose of Pfizer vaccine after assessing their benefits and risks:

- people aged 18–49 years with [underlying medical conditions](#)
- people aged 18-64 years who are at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of an occupational or institutional setting

Why is a booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine recommended?

COVID-19 [vaccine effectiveness](#) against infection (having symptoms of COVID-19) has declined over time and also possibly due to the Delta variant. Effectiveness remains high against severe infection (hospitalization and death), but is starting to decline in those 65 or older.

Data from a Pfizer [clinical trial](#) indicates an improved immune response after a booster dose, likely providing improved protection against COVID-19. Additionally, [data](#) from Israel show Pfizer booster doses reducing infections and severe illness. Data from the clinical trial and Israel indicate that side effects from a booster dose are similar to what is seen after second doses are administered.

What occupations are considered at an increased risk for COVID-19?

- First responders (healthcare workers, firefighters, police, congregate care staff)
- Education staff (teachers, support staff, daycare workers)
- Food and agriculture workers
- Manufacturing workers
- Corrections workers

- U.S. Postal Service workers
- Public transit workers
- Grocery store workers

Do I need proof of an underlying health condition or my occupation to receive a booster dose?

No. Self-report of an underlying health condition or your occupation is all that is needed to receive a booster dose.

What about individuals who have received another brand of COVID-19 vaccine?

There is currently insufficient data to determine if individuals who received other brands of the COVID-19 vaccine need a COVID-19 booster. Currently, individuals who received a primary series of Moderna or Johnson & Johnson vaccine should **not** receive a booster dose.

I'm not in this population. Am I going to be eligible for a booster dose?

Other individuals may be recommended to receive a booster dose in the future. The North Dakota Department of Health will communicate those recommendations if that time comes.

Does this mean COVID-19 vaccines are not effective?

This recommendation does not mean that COVID-19 vaccines are not working. Hospitalization rates are [10-22 times higher](#) in unvaccinated adults compared to vaccinated adults. Vaccinated people are [five times less likely](#) to get sick from COVID-19 compared to those who are unvaccinated. Vaccine effectiveness has declined against infection (having COVID-19 symptoms) but is still highly protective against hospitalization and death. Effectiveness against hospitalization has declined for those 65 and older.

Is a booster dose different from an additional dose?

Yes, People who are moderately to severely [immunocompromised](#) and initially received either the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine series are recommended to receive an additional dose of either Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. The additional dose is given at least 28 days after completion of the initial series. Immunocompromised individuals never achieved high protection with the initial vaccine series and need three doses to achieve higher protection.

Do I need a booster dose to be considered fully vaccinated?

No. For public health purposes, people are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after receiving two doses of Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine or one dose of Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine.

Where can I get vaccinated?



Information on COVID-19 vaccine providers and clinics near you can be found on the NDDoH [COVID Vaccine Locator](#) page. You can also contact the NDDoH Hotline at 1.866.207.2880 for assistance.