

NEW COVID-19 BOOSTERS FAQ

Q: Did the FDA and CDC approve this new booster?

A: Yes. They applied for EUA and were approved. [Click here](#) to see the fact sheet on the Pfizer bivalent vaccine booster, and [click here](#) to see the fact sheet on the Moderna bivalent vaccine booster.

Q: How do the new COVID-19 vaccine boosters differ from the existing vaccines and boosters?

A: These vaccines were specifically formulated to target the new COVID-19 variants. They are called bivalent because half of the COVID-19 vaccine booster targets the original COVID-19 virus, and the other half works against the Omicron variant, including the spike protein for BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants, which now account for nearly 100% of our positive COVID-19 cases.

Q: How do these new COVID-19 vaccine boosters work?

A: According to Pfizer, the bivalent vaccine contains mRNA encoding the original SARS-CoV-2 spike protein, which is present in the original COVID-19 vaccines, together with mRNA encoding the spike protein of the Omicron BA.4/BA.5 variants.

The booster stimulates the body's immune system and works by causing the body to produce antibodies against the virus that causes COVID-19. Similar to the original COVID-19 vaccines, this vaccine uses mRNA that carries instructions that cells in the body can use to make the spike protein, and the cells then make antibodies against the spike protein to help fight off the virus.

Q: Who is eligible for the new bivalent COVID-19 vaccine boosters?

A: The FDA granted EUA for the use of the Pfizer COVID-19 bivalent vaccine booster for individuals 5 years and older, while the Moderna COVID-19 bivalent vaccine booster received EUA for individuals 6 and older. The bivalent COVID-19 vaccine boosters are authorized as a single dose in people who have completed a primary vaccination series.

People who have already received the initial two-shot series of either vaccine are eligible, as well as those who have received the original vaccine plus one or two booster shots.

Q: How long should I wait if I just received the existing COVID-19 vaccine booster?

A: According to the FDA, you should wait at least two months following the primary vaccine series or booster vaccination.

Q: Does immunity still take two weeks to develop after this shot?

A: Antibody titers will start to rise within days after getting the shot, but it will probably take a couple of weeks to get the highest amount of antibodies, according to national experts.

Q: How long should I wait to get the bivalent booster if I just had COVID-19?

A: The FDA and CDC authorized the bivalent vaccine boosters for two months after previous boosters or infection. Some experts say it may be beneficial to wait a little longer.



Q: Can I still get the original vaccine boosters?

A: No, the COVID-19 vaccine boosters that target only the original strain are no longer authorized as boosters in people 12 years old and older.

Q: How do I know these new COVID-19 vaccine boosters are safe since they were only tested on mice?

A: FDA officials say the public can rest assured that a great deal of care has been taken to ensure that these bivalent COVID-19 vaccine boosters meet the agency's rigorous safety, effectiveness and manufacturing quality standards for EUA.

According to the FDA, the decision was based on the totality of available evidence, including safety and effectiveness of the original COVID-19 vaccines in humans, safety and immunogenicity data from a clinical study of a bivalent COVID-19 vaccine very similar to these new vaccines that contained mRNA specifically targeted to the omicron BA.1 variant, and nonclinical data obtained using a bivalent COVID-19 vaccine that contained mRNA of the original strain and mRNA in common between the BA.4 and BA.5 lineages of the omicron variant.

Q: Why haven't these vaccine boosters been tested on humans?

A: The FDA studied mice trial data — and human clinical trial results from a similar vaccine that targets the original omicron strain (BA.1) and extensive research on mRNA technology — to evaluate the new shots in an effort to get them out as soon as possible, according to [recent tweets](#) from the FDA commissioner, Dr. Robert Califf. Both companies are currently conducting human clinical trials on the new bivalent vaccine boosters targeting BA.4/BA.5.

Q: If I got the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine and booster, do I need the Pfizer bivalent shot or can I get Moderna?

A: No, according to the FDA, the updated booster you receive does not need to be from the same manufacturer that made the vaccine you received for your primary vaccination or previous booster.

Q: Why should I get the bivalent COVID-19 vaccine booster?

A: The BA.5 strain accounts for the vast majority of new COVID-19 cases in the U.S., according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). These new vaccines are designed to significantly increase your immunity to the highly contagious virus and prevent severe disease.

Experts are predicting another wave of COVID-19 in the fall and winter, and the bivalent vaccine boosters will help protect you against serious outcomes in the future. FDA officials also say staying up to date on COVID-19 vaccines and boosters will also help prevent long COVID symptoms if you contract COVID-19 in the future.

Q: What are the side effects?

A: According to Pfizer and Moderna, the comparable boosters targeting the original omicron variant were generally well-tolerated in clinical trials, with side effects similar to booster doses of the current vaccines. The companies expect similar side effects with these vaccines. Just like when you received your original vaccine and booster, you will be monitored for at least 15 minutes afterward for signs of an allergic reaction.

Q: Where and when will Houston Methodist be offering the new boosters?

A: If you are an employee, the boosters will be offered through employee health. The public should get theirs through their physicians' office or a retail pharmacy.

Q: What COVID-19 bivalent vaccine booster will Houston Methodist administer?

A: Houston Methodist will administer the Pfizer bivalent vaccine booster.

Q: How often will you need to get the COVID-19 booster shots?

A: It's not clear yet how often boosters are needed, but many experts say it's reasonable to expect that COVID-19 shots could be given on an annual schedule like the flu shot, which also changes yearly.

Q: Should I get the bivalent booster at the same time I get the flu shot?

A: There is no medical reason not to receive both vaccines in the same visit. People who react strongly to the COVID-19 vaccine or flu shot may want to wait a few days in between. It will not reduce the effectiveness of either vaccine.