

## COVID Vaccines – Third Doses & Boosters

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized third doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines for people with certain health conditions that compromise their immune systems. Studies have shown that two doses may not have provided the desired protection for this group, who are more likely to get seriously ill with COVID-19. You may be eligible if you have:

- Been receiving active cancer treatment for tumors or cancers of the blood
- Received an organ transplant and are taking medicine to suppress the immune system
- Received a stem cell transplant within the last two years or are taking medicine to suppress the immune system (Check with your doctor to see if any of your medications qualify)
- Moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency (such as DiGeorge syndrome or Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome)
- Advanced or untreated HIV infection
- Active treatment with high-dose corticosteroids or other drugs that may suppress your immune system

Talk with your doctor about your medical condition and whether getting a third dose is appropriate for you.

If you don't fall into any of these categories and have completed the COVID vaccine series, you may be eligible to receive a booster at least six months after your final dose. The CDC has approved boosters of the Pfizer vaccine for certain individuals who have completed the Pfizer vaccine two-dose series. Boosters will be available as soon as September 24.

	Third dose	Booster dose
<b>mRNA vaccine type</b>	Pfizer or Moderna	Pfizer only
<b>Eligibility</b>	Anyone with moderate or severely immunocompromised status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone ages 65 and older <b>should</b> receive a booster</li> <li>• Ages 50-64 with underlying medical conditions <b>should</b> receive a booster</li> <li>• Ages 18-49 with underlying medical conditions <b>may</b> receive a booster</li> <li>• Ages 18-64 with occupational or setting risk <b>may</b> receive a booster</li> </ul>
<b>When</b>	28 days following completion of the initial two-dose series	6 months following completion of the initial two-dose series

Q: Why is the timeline for receiving a third dose different for immunocompromised people?

A: Fully vaccinated, immunocompromised people make up a large proportion of hospitalized breakthrough cases. They may also be more likely to transmit COVID-19 to household members. Immunocompromised people commonly require different vaccine considerations than "healthy" individuals.

Q: What medical conditions may qualify me to receive a COVID-19 booster?

A: According to the CDC, adults of any age with these underlying medical conditions can be more likely to get severely ill from COVID-19. These conditions include, but are not limited to:

- Cancer
- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic lung diseases
- Dementia
- Diabetes
- Down syndrome
- Heart conditions
- HIV
- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system)
- Liver disease
- Overweight or obesity
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease or thalassemia
- Smoking (current or former)
- Solid organ or blood stem cell transplant
- Stroke
- Substance use disorders

Talk to your doctor or a healthcare provider if you are unsure if you qualify.

Q: What occupational or institutional settings may qualify me to receive a booster shot?

A: You may qualify to receive a booster of the Pfizer vaccine if you work or live in these settings:

- Healthcare workers
- Teachers
- Grocery store workers
- Retail workers
- First responders
- Residents and staff of congregant settings (Corrections facilities, homeless shelters, group homes, etc.)
- Others where you are in close contact with people less than six feet apart on an ongoing basis

Q: When will the general public be able to get a booster shot?

A: FDA staff are carefully reviewing the available data to make the best informed recommendation for the general public to receive a booster of the Pfizer vaccine. We do not yet have a potential timeline on this decision.

Q: Have booster shots for the Moderna vaccine been approved?

A: At this time, only booster doses of the Pfizer vaccine have been authorized for individuals 65 and older and those 18 and older who are at high risk of COVID-19 or have risk due to occupational or setting exposure. Moderna has not yet requested approval for booster doses of their vaccine, so authorization is likely to be delayed.

Q: Where should I go to get my booster shot?

A: You'll be able to get your booster shot in many of the same places that were available for the first two doses. These include your primary care provider, Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health and many local pharmacies. A complete list is available at [lmh.org/vaccine](https://lmh.org/vaccine), [douglascountyks.org/coronavirus](https://douglascountyks.org/coronavirus) or at [vaccinefinder.org/search](https://vaccinefinder.org/search).

There's no need to call your provider at this time. We will share more information as soon as it's available.

Q: Do I need to sign up on a list to be notified when booster doses are available?

A: No. Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health and LMH Health will not be using a notification list for booster doses. We will share more information as soon as it's available.

Q: I would like to receive my booster shot as soon as I can. Could receiving the booster shot earlier than the suggested timeline cause negative effects?

A: We are still learning more about the recommended timeline for healthy individuals to receive a booster shot. The recommendation will be based on data from extensive trials and should be followed closely in order to achieve the intended results of increased protection.

Q: If I need a booster, does that mean the vaccine isn't working?

A: No. The COVID-19 vaccines are working very well to prevent severe illness, hospitalization and death against the delta variant. However, experts are starting to see reduced protection against mild and moderate disease caused by the variant. A booster will help to maximize and prolong your protection.

Q: What's the difference between a third dose and a booster shot? Aren't they the same thing?

A: The medication for both the third dose and the booster is the same, though the purposes are different.

Immunocompromised people may not develop the same level of immune response after vaccination as others. A third dose is recommended for those individuals to help them build the same level of immunity as people who aren't immunocompromised.

A booster shot is one that's given to people who had an adequate immune response to the primary vaccine series as its protection decreases over time.

Q: I thought that Pfizer and Moderna were both a two-shot series. Why do I need a booster dose?

A: Although both of the vaccines are highly effective against severe illness, hospitalization and death, their effectiveness starts to decrease over time. A booster dose increases the protection the vaccine provides.

Q: I got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Should I get another dose?

A: There isn't enough data to determine if an additional dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine will improve immune response, so it hasn't yet been recommended. We expect more information in the coming weeks.

Q: Does my third shot have to be the same as my first two or can I mix them?

A: We recommend you receive the same mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) that you previously received. Currently, only booster doses of the Pfizer vaccine are authorized for certain groups. See the chart on page 1 for eligibility details.

If the FDA approves booster doses for those who received the Moderna vaccine and you can't remember which vaccine you received for your first series and a record isn't available, it might be OK to get a booster with either mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna). We will share more information as it is available.

**Please note:** You **cannot** receive an additional dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine at this time.