

**UPDATED!** November 28, 2022

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

# COVID-19 VACCINE BOOSTER DOSES

For people 5  
years and older



- ▶ More than **12.8 billion** doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been given around the world.<sup>1</sup> The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends a **Fall/Winter 2022 booster vaccine dose** for people aged 5 and older.

### + Why are **Fall/Winter 2022 COVID-19 booster doses** recommended?

COVID-19 booster doses in Fall/Winter 2022 will make sure that people have the strongest protection from infection, serious illness, and death.<sup>2</sup> Booster doses **build back protection**, and give more protection against new variants.<sup>1,2</sup>

NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON IMMUNIZATION

### NACI **STRONGLY** recommends a **Fall/Winter 2022 COVID-19 booster** for:<sup>3</sup>

- People **65 years and older**
- People who are **pregnant**
- People **18+ who:**
  - Identify as First Nations, Metis, Inuit
  - Belong to a racialized or marginalized community (e.g., living with disability)
- People **12+ who:**
  - Have a weakened immune system
  - Have a serious health condition
  - Live in a group setting (e.g., long-term care)

*Everyone 5 years and older can consider getting a Fall 2022 COVID-19 booster dose.*

### + Does it matter which **bivalent vaccine** I get?

**No.** All bivalent booster vaccines give good protection against Omicron variants.

### What are the new **BIVALENT mRNA COVID-19 vaccines**?

A “bivalent” vaccine targets 2 variants of a virus: the original COVID-19 virus and the Omicron strain.

Approved bivalent vaccines in Canada:



#### **Moderna (Spikevax™)**

COVID-19 mRNA **bivalent** vaccine

- For people 18 years and older
- Approved by Health Canada (Sept 2022)
- Targets original COVID-19 virus plus Omicron **BA.1**



#### **Moderna (Spikevax™)**

COVID-19 mRNA **bivalent** vaccine


- For people 18 years and older
- Approved by Health Canada (Nov 2022)
- Targets original COVID-19 virus plus Omicron **BA.4/5**



#### **Pfizer (Comirnaty®)**

COVID-19 mRNA **bivalent** vaccine

- For people 12 years and older
- Approved by Health Canada (Oct 2022)
- Targets original COVID-19 virus plus Omicron **BA.4/5**

Find the most recent NACI  guidance here:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/canadian-immunization-guide-part-4-active-vaccines/page-26-covid-19-vaccine.html>

## + Which Fall/Winter 2022 COVID-19 booster should I get?

Age	Preferred Fall Booster Option	Alternative Fall Booster Option
5 to 11 years	Additional dose of Pfizer (Comirnaty®)	Additional dose of Moderna (Spikevax™)
12 to 17 years (healthy)	Pfizer (Comirnaty®) <b>bivalent</b>	Pfizer (Comirnaty®)
12 to 17 years (risk factors for severe COVID-19)*	Pfizer (Comirnaty®) <b>bivalent</b>	Moderna (Spikevax™) <b>bivalent</b> <sup>†</sup>
18 years and older	Moderna (Spikevax™) <b>bivalent</b> <b>OR</b> Pfizer (Comirnaty®) <b>bivalent</b>	Pfizer (Comirnaty®) Moderna (Spikevax™) Novavax (Nuvaxovid®) vaccine

\*Risk factors include having a serious health condition, a developmental disability, or having a weakened immune system.

<sup>†</sup>Off-label use only. Not approved by Health Canada but recommended as an alternative by NACI.<sup>2</sup>

## + Do the bivalent boosters offer better protection than the original COVID-19 vaccines?


We do not know yet. The bivalent vaccines help your body make more antibodies against the Omicron variants.<sup>4</sup> We do not know yet if a bivalent vaccine will give you better protection compared to the original vaccine.

## + Why do I need multiple COVID-19 vaccine doses?


The virus that causes COVID-19 continues to evolve. The original mRNA vaccines provide strong protection against severe illness, but the protection starts to fade after about 6 months. It fades more quickly in older adults. Routine vaccine doses are most important for people at higher risk of severe illness, including older adults and those with a weakened immune system. New vaccines that could provide longer lasting protection, such as nasal vaccines, are being studied.

## Staying **UP-TO-DATE** with COVID-19 vaccination ↘


### Adults 18 years and older:

**Yes.**  All adults aged 18 and older may be offered a Fall/Winter booster no matter how many booster doses they have already had. It is especially important for people at higher risk of serious illness to get all recommended vaccine doses. This includes people who are 65 years and older, pregnant, have a serious health condition, or have a weakened immune system.

### People 12 to 17 years old:

**Yes.**  People aged 12 to 17 years may be offered a Fall/Winter booster, even if they already had 1 booster. People aged 12 to 17 years who do not have other risks for serious illness or who have had a recent COVID-19 infection can speak with their healthcare team for advice.

### Children 5 to 11 years old:

**Yes.**  Children aged 5 to 11 who have not had 1 booster dose can get a Fall/Winter booster dose. Children will be offered an original mRNA vaccine as a booster dose. Bivalent vaccines are not yet approved for children in Canada.



✦ **How soon after the last COVID-19 vaccine or COVID-19 infection should a Fall/Winter 2022 booster dose be given?**

NACI recommends getting a Fall/Winter booster dose 6 months (168 days or 24 weeks) after the last COVID-19 vaccine dose (or last confirmed COVID-19 infection).<sup>2</sup> A booster can be safely given as soon as a person has recovered from a COVID-19 infection, but waiting may give better protection.

✦ **Should people who have had COVID-19 get booster doses?**

Yes. NACI recommends waiting 6 months after a COVID-19 infection to get a vaccine. The immune system's response to infection is not predictable. Getting all recommended COVID-19 vaccines will give you the strongest possible protection. In younger people who have had at least 1 booster and a recent COVID-19 infection (within 6 months), we don't know yet how much extra protection another booster dose will give. If you are unsure about getting a Fall booster dose, speak with your health-care team for advice.

✦ **What are the side effects for bivalent vaccines?**

In studies, the bivalent vaccines had similar side effects to the original mRNA vaccines. Many people notice mild side effects like arm pain and fever that get better in a few days.

Inflammation of the heart (myocarditis) and of the sac around the heart (pericarditis) has happened rarely after mRNA COVID-19 vaccines.<sup>2</sup> The risk of myocarditis after an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine is much lower than the risk of myocarditis due to COVID-19 infection.<sup>5</sup> The rate of myocarditis with the booster may be lower than with the initial doses.

✦ **Do I need to get the same COVID-19 vaccine brand for every dose?**

No. The brand of your Fall/Winter 2022 booster does not need to match the brand of your initial doses. mRNA vaccines (e.g., Pfizer Comirnaty®, Moderna Spikevax™) and protein-based vaccines (e.g., Novavax Nuvaxovid®) can be used as boosters.

✦ **If someone had a cold recently and doesn't know if it was COVID-19 or not, should they get a booster dose?**

Yes. Don't put off getting a booster dose. There are no safety concerns if you get a COVID-19 vaccine shortly after having a COVID-19 infection.



**Staying up to date by getting all recommended vaccine doses**

=

**Best protection** from getting severely ill or dying from COVID-19



<sup>1</sup> Our World In Data. (2022). Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccinations.

<sup>2</sup> NACI. (2022). COVID-19 vaccine - Canadian Immunization Guide.

<sup>3</sup> NACI. (2022). Recommendations on the use of bivalent vaccines.

<sup>4</sup> NEJM. (2022). A Bivalent Omicron-Containing Booster Vaccine against Covid-19.

<sup>5</sup> CDC. (2021). Association Between COVID-19 and Myocarditis Using Hospital-Based Administrative Data.