

BOOSTER SHOT FACT SHEET

WHAT IS THE BOOSTER SHOT AND SHOULD I GET IT?

While the vaccines are highly effective, there is a gradual decline in protection over time. As a result, all people can benefit from a booster shot months after their initial vaccine series. Booster shots keep the antibodies in your immune system at a high level, providing better and longer protection to you and the people around you.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE BOOSTER SHOT?

Between November 2021 and January 2022, booster shots are first being made available to the general population age 70 and older, Indigenous people 18 and older, and people with compromised immune systems. After these groups are vaccinated, everyone who received their first and second shot, who wants a booster, will receive it between 6 to 8 months after their second shot. For ages 12-17, no booster is planned at this time, even in vulnerable or high risk youth, including Indigenous people. If a 17-year-old is turning 18, they may be eligible for a booster dose.

WHERE CAN I GET MY BOOSTER SHOT?

The First Nations Health Authority is working with communities to provide in-community booster clinics, beginning with rural and remote communities and those with residents who received their second doses more than six months ago and have the shortest intervals between the first and second doses. Those who received their first two doses through provincial clinics will receive an invite to get their booster dose from the provincial online vaccination system.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO GET A BOOSTER SHOT?

If you are over 18 and fully vaccinated, you should get a booster shot when it becomes available to you. In BC, this will be about six to eight months after your second shot. This is the best timing to ensure the longest and strongest protection while at the same time minimizing the potential for side effects (mostly a sore arm and the kind of “flu-like” symptoms you might have had after other vaccinations).

DOES THIS MEAN MY VACCINE IS NO LONGER EFFECTIVE?

For those who are fully vaccinated, thankfully immunity does not suddenly disappear, as immunity to COVID-19 infection decreases slowly over time. Your original vaccine doses continue to provide good protection, especially against severe disease, while you wait to get a booster shot.

DOES IT MATTER WHICH BOOSTER I GET?

Both Moderna and Pfizer have been carefully studied and are safe and effective as boosters, so get whichever one is available when you go to your appointment! Clinics may have only one type of vaccine on hand, and either can be used for the booster shot, no matter which vaccine you received for your first two shots.

IS A BOOSTER SIMPLY A “THIRD SHOT”?

No. A third shot is part of the primary vaccine series for people with immune systems that are moderately or severely weakened, such as people who are on cancer treatments or who have received an organ transplant. Although these people are considered fully vaccinated on their BC Vaccine Card, they need the extra shot to more fully protect themselves. The third shot helps build enough antibodies to bring them up to a similar level of protection that people with healthy immune systems can expect after only two shots. They will likely still need a booster shot as well.

Sources:

<https://www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/covid-19-boosters-what-they-are-and-why-you-need-them>

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<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/vaccine-registration-eligibility#booster>

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