



## Do I need a fall 2022/winter 2023 COVID booster dose?



### Why are booster doses important?

For people 5 years and older, 2 COVID vaccine doses give important protection. But this protection drops over time and 2 doses do not protect as well against new variants. COVID booster doses build back and strengthen protection against the virus. Staying up-to-date with vaccines is important while COVID continues to spread at high levels in our communities.

**At this time, experts in Ontario recommend booster doses for everyone 5 and older.**

Staying up-to-date with vaccines works with other measures to give you the best protection from:

- ✓ Getting COVID
- ✓ Spreading COVID
- ✓ Getting so sick from COVID that you have to go to hospital
- ✓ Dying from COVID

Getting boosters is common. For example, people get 4 vaccines for polio in the first 18 months of life and a tetanus vaccine booster is recommended every ten years.

### Who should get a fall 2022/winter 2023 COVID booster dose?

A first booster dose is recommended for children 5-to-11 who have not had one yet.

A fall 2022/winter 2023 booster dose is recommended for everyone 12 and older, no matter how many booster doses they have had.

## What is the recommended timing of a fall 2022/winter 2023 COVID booster dose?

The recommended timing of your booster dose depends on your risk of serious illness and whether you are part of a priority group.

If you are at higher risk of serious illness or you belong to a priority group, it's strongly recommended that you get a booster dose 3 months after your last vaccine dose (or your last confirmed COVID infection.)



You are at higher risk of serious illness if you:

- » Are 65 years and older
- » Are 12 years and older and have a weakened immune system
- » Are 12 years and older and have a health condition that increases your risk of serious illness e.g. heart disease, diabetes
- » Are 12 years and older and live in a congregate setting e.g. retirement home, long-term care home
- » Are pregnant

You belong to a priority group if you are:

- » An adult who is First Nations, Inuit, or Métis
- » An adult who lives with someone who is First Nations, Inuit or Métis
- » A healthcare worker
- » An adult who belongs to a racialized or marginalized community hit hard by COVID

**For all other people 12 years and older,** a booster dose is recommended 6 months after your last COVID vaccine dose (or your last confirmed COVID infection, if you had COVID after your last dose).

**For children aged 5 to 11 years old,** a first booster dose is recommended 6 months after your last COVID vaccine dose (or your last confirmed COVID infection, if you had COVID after your last dose).

Use Ontario's online tool to find out when to get your booster dose: <https://www.ontario.ca/vaccine-eligibility/>

## Do I still need boosters if I already had COVID?

Yes. If you have had COVID, you should still get a booster dose as soon as you are eligible this fall or winter.. Getting all recommended vaccine doses will give you the strongest protection.

## What if I'm pregnant?

Staying up-to-date with COVID vaccine doses is especially important if you are pregnant. Getting COVID when you are pregnant can cause serious problems for you and your baby. A booster can prevent those complications and lower the risk of your newborn getting COVID.



## What vaccines are recommended as booster doses?

For children 5 to 11 years old, the Pfizer (Comirnaty™) 10 mcg monovalent mRNA vaccine is recommended as a booster dose.

For youth 12 to 17 years old, the Pfizer bivalent mRNA vaccine is recommended.

Adults 18 years and older can get either the Pfizer bivalent vaccine or the Moderna (Spikevax™) bivalent vaccine.

The Novavax (Nuvoxavid™) protein subunit vaccine can be given as a booster dose to adults who may not receive mRNA vaccines.

## What are bivalent vaccines?

Bivalent vaccines target the original strain of the COVID virus and Omicron sub-variants. The Pfizer bivalent vaccine is approved by Health Canada as a booster for people 12 and older and the Moderna bivalent is approved as a booster for people 18 and older.

## Is one bivalent vaccine better than another?

We don't know. Both the Pfizer and Moderna bivalent vaccines give better protection against COVID than the vaccines that target only the original virus.

If you are 18 years or older, it's recommended that you get the first bivalent vaccine available to you.

The Pfizer bivalent vaccine is recommended for people aged 12 to 17. Those in this age group who are at high risk could also consider the Moderna bivalent vaccine.

**Remember: While COVID continues to be common in Ontario, there are things you can do to protect yourself and others.**

- ✓ Get all vaccine doses that are recommended for you.
- ✓ If you feel sick, stay home.
- ✓ Wear a well-fitted mask in indoor public spaces.
- ✓ Gather outdoors whenever possible.
- ✓ Breathe clean air: open windows, keep the furnace fan “on”, and use air filters