

Third Doses vs. Booster Shots



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Who is eligible to receive an additional vaccine dose?

Whether and when you can get a third COVID-19 vaccine shot depends on if you have a compromised immune system and what COVID-19 vaccine you previously received.

Third Doses

For those with a moderately to severely compromised immune system, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends receiving an additional third dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine at least 28 days after receiving the second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine series. Although the CDC recommends people talk with their health care provider about their medical condition to determine whether getting an additional dose is appropriate for them, this population generally includes people who 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 2 years or are taking medicine to suppress the immune system
- Moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency (such as DiGeorge syndrome and Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome)
- Advanced or untreated HIV infection
- Active treatment with high-dose corticosteroids or other drugs that may suppress your immune response

Booster Shots

For others who received both doses of the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines but are not immunocompromised, starting September 20th, COVID-19 booster shots will be available 8 months after their second shot. The federal government is working to ensure those who are most at risk are the first people eligible for a booster. This includes healthcare providers, residents of long-term care facilities and other older adults. Implementation of the plan is subject to the Food and Drug Administration's authorization and the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommendation.

What is the difference between a third dose and a booster shot?

For certain immunocompromised people, 28 days after they received their second shot of an mRNA vaccine (i.e. Pfizer or Moderna), this additional third dose is intended to improve the immunocompromised people's response to their initial vaccine series. In contrast, a "booster shot" refers to another dose of a vaccine that is given to someone who built enough protection after vaccination but whose protection decreased over time (referred to as "waning immunity").

Why get an additional dose or booster shot?

People with moderately to severely compromised immune systems are especially vulnerable to COVID-19. Studies indicate that some immunocompromised people don't always build the same level of immunity after vaccination the way non-immunocompromised people do and may benefit from an additional dose to ensure adequate protection against COVID-19.

For others, the COVID-19 vaccines are working very well to prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death, even against the highly transmissible Delta variant. However, public health experts are starting to see reduced protection against mild and moderate disease due in part because of the Delta variant. For that reason, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has developed a plan to begin offering a booster shot this fall so that vaccinated people can maintain protection for a longer period.

Will people who received Johnson & Johnson's (Janssen) COVID-19 vaccine need a booster shot?

It has not been fully determined whether a booster is warranted for the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, although a booster is expected to be recommended soon. Because the Johnson & Johnson vaccine was not available in the United States until 70 days after the first mRNA vaccine doses (Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna), the data needed to make this decision is not available yet. This data is expected in the coming weeks.

Where do you get an additional third dose?

Any vaccine provider should be able to provide third doses for immunocompromised individuals and offer booster shots once authorized to start doing so. When making an appointment, individuals will also ask to provide the dates of their previous COVID-19 vaccinations (available on vaccination cards).

The following locations on O'ahu are already offering shots for immunocompromised individuals:

- **Adventist Health Castle clinic at Windward Mall.** Shots are available 12 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Tuesday through Friday; 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. Individuals must be at least 12 years old and have received their second dose at least 28 days before receiving their third dose. Walk-ins are accepted. Appointments can be made [here](#). Call 808-263-5002 for more info.
- **Queen's Health Systems.** [Click here](#) for more info. Call 808-691-2222 to make an appointment. Walk-ins are accepted.
- **Hawai'i Pacific Health.** Appointments are encouraged, but walk-ins are also accepted. [Click here](#) to make an appointment.

Those who qualify for a third dose today (immunocompromised individuals) generally must attest to the medical condition(s) they have making them eligible for an additional dose. They may also need to present proof of their condition upon arrival.