People 12 years of age and older who are unable or choose not to get a recommended mRNA vaccine are considered up to date when they get the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine dose approved for their age group.

In addition to simplifying COVID-19 vaccine recommendations in April 2023, the CDC made it easier for people at higher risk for severe illness to get added protection from additional vaccine doses. Adults 65 years of age and older may get a second shot of the bivalent vaccine if it has been at least 4 months since their first bivalent shot. Immunocompromised people also are eligible for additional shots.

One thing is certain: the virus that causes COVID-19 will continue to evolve. COVID-19 vaccine recommendations are likely to change as the CDC continues to monitor newly emerging COVID-19 data. For the latest information and recommendations on being up to date, scan the QR code with your smartphone camera or visit *https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html*.

Talk to your pharmacist or other trusted health care professional if you have any questions or need more information about COVID-19 vaccines.

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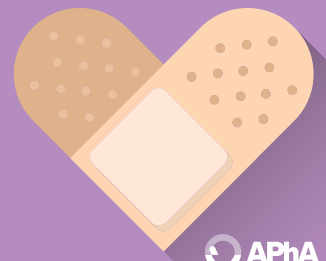
What Does It Mean to Be "Up to Date" With COVID-19 Vaccines?



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What Does It Mean to Be "Up to Date" With COVID-19 Vaccines?

The COVID-19 vaccines available in the United States protect people from getting seriously ill, being hospitalized, or dying from COVID-19. Since the first shot was given in December 2020, the COVID-19 vaccines have prevented millions of hospitalizations and deaths.

COVID-19 vaccines help our bodies develop immunity to SARS-CoV-2—the virus that causes COVID-19—without us having to be infected. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is a safer, more reliable way to build protection than getting sick with COVID-19. And COVID-19 vaccines can offer added protection to people who previously have had COVID-19, including protection against being hospitalized because of a new infection.

Like all viruses, SARS-CoV-2 has evolved over time, and new variants have emerged. COVID-19 vaccination recommendations have changed as the virus has changed. These changes were both anticipated and necessary to ensure the vaccines remained effective. But for many people, the vaccination recommendations have seemed complicated and confusing.

A key to clearing up the confusion is understanding the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) terminology for COVID-19 vaccines. Specifically, it is important to understand what the CDC means when it recommends that everyone stay "up to date" with COVID-19 vaccines. Knowing about new recommendations that took effect in April 2023 are important for protecting your health.

Vaccine Primary Series

From December 2020 until early April 2023, most people who chose to be vaccinated against COVID-19 received two shots spaced up to 8 weeks apart. Those two shots were known as the *primary series.* For most people, the primary series shots were mRNA vaccines from Pfizer–BioNTech or Moderna.

According to the CDC, you were considered to be *fully vaccinated* (or *fully immunized*) after you received both shots in the primary series.

Original (Monovalent) Boosters

Although some vaccines (such as smallpox vaccines) provide lifelong protection, most vaccines (including COVID-19 vaccines) require more doses—sometimes months or years later. The immunity from the initial vaccination naturally starts to fade over time. An additional dose of vaccine—a booster shot—helps to increase levels of immune cells and maintain protection longer.

The first COVID-19 booster shots were authorized in September 2021. These shots were given to people after they had already completed the primary series. Adults 50 years of age and older and certain immunocompromised individuals (people with weakened immune systems) became eligible for a second booster shot in March 2022.

Updated (Bivalent) Vaccines

All of the COVID-19 vaccines used for the primary series—as well as for booster shots that were administered from September 2021 to September 2022—were monovalent vaccines. This means that they targeted only the original strain of SARS-CoV-2.

Bivalent formulations of the Pfizer–BioNTech and Moderna vaccines became available in September 2022. The bivalent vaccines target both the original virus and Omicron variants BA.4 and BA.5. (The CDC refers to the bivalent formulations as "updated" vaccines.)

As of December 2022, the CDC recommended that **everyone** 6 months of age and older receive one shot of an updated vaccine. This includes people who may have received one or more monovalent boosters.

When Are You "Up to Date" With COVID-19 Vaccines?

You are up to date with COVID-19 vaccines when you have received all of the vaccine doses currently recommended for you. The recommendations are based on the most recent COVID-19 data and focused on ensuring the best possible protection against severe disease (such as getting seriously ill, being hospitalized, or dying).

In April 2023, the CDC took steps to simplify COVID-19 vaccine recommendations for most Americans. **Everyone 6 years of age and older is considered to be up to date with COVID-19 vaccines after receiving one dose of an updated (bivalent) mRNA vaccine.**

These simple questions make it much easier to know whether you are up to date with COVID-19 vaccines:

- *Did you already receive a booster shot with a bivalent vaccine?* If yes, you are up to date!
- *Did you complete a primary vaccine series, but didn't get an updated booster?* You will be up to date after you receive one shot of the bivalent vaccine.
- *Are you new to COVID-19 vaccination, with no previous shots?* You will be up to date after you receive one shot of the bivalent vaccine. You no longer need to complete a primary vaccine series first.

The definition of "up to date" may be different for some people because of their age group or certain health conditions. Children younger than 6 years of age currently have different recommendations based on their age and their previous vaccinations. People who are moderately or severely immunocompromised have a special set of recommendations for COVID-19 vaccines.