

September 30: CDC Guidance on Booster Shots, NM Workforce COVID-19 Vaccinations and Booster Shots, and Flu Vaccination

Today's issue features guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) about COVID-19 booster shots. It also includes information about COVID-19 vaccination, booster shots and flu vaccines for the NM workforce.

CDC GUIDANCE ON BOOSTER SHOTS

Following Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorization of booster shots for those fully vaccinated against COVID-19, the CDC last week released **recommendations** identifying who **should** and who **may** receive booster shots with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. This updated guidance allows individuals who have completed the two-dose Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine series to receive a booster shot at least six months after their second dose.

The information below includes excerpts from the **Vaccines Booster page on the CDC website** and will support you in your discussion with patients.

CDC booster recommendations

COVID-19 vaccine booster shots are available for the following Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine recipients. Additional information is available on the **CDC website**.

- People 65 years and older, and residents in long-term care settings **should** receive a booster shot
- People ages 50 to 64 years with **underlying medical conditions should** receive a booster shot
- People ages 18 to 49 years with **underlying medical conditions may** receive a booster shot, based on their individual benefits and risks.
- People ages 18 to 64 years who are at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of **occupational** or **institutional setting may** receive a booster shot, based on their individual benefits and risks.

Data supporting need for booster

The most recent data suggests the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines to prevent infection **may decrease over time**, and that they **may be less effective against the delta variant**. Importantly, COVID-19 vaccination for adults 65 and older remains effective in preventing severe disease and hospitalization. Emerging evidence also shows that among healthcare and other front-line workers, vaccine effectiveness against COVID-19 infections is decreasing over time. This

lower effectiveness is likely due to the combination of waning immunity as well as the greater infectivity of the delta variant.

Data from a small clinical trial demonstrates that a Pfizer-BioNTech **booster shot increased the immune response** in trial participants who finished their primary series six months earlier. With an increased immune response, individuals should have improved protection against SARS-CoV-2, including the delta variant.

Frequently asked patient questions

When can I get a COVID-19 vaccine booster if I am NOT in one of the recommended groups?

Additional populations may be recommended to receive a booster shot as more data become available. The COVID-19 vaccines approved and authorized in the U.S. continue to be effective at reducing risk of severe disease, hospitalization and death.

What should people who received Moderna or Johnson & Johnson vaccines do?

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and CDC's recommendations are bound by FDA **authorization**. At this time, the Pfizer-BioNTech booster authorization only applies to people whose primary series was the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Additional data on the effectiveness and safety of Moderna and Johnson & Johnson booster shots are expected soon.

If we need a booster shot, does that mean that the vaccines aren't working?

No. **COVID-19 vaccines are working well** to prevent severe illness, hospitalization and death, even against the widely circulating **delta variant**.

What are the risks to getting a booster shot?

The **reactions reported** after getting the Pfizer-BioNTech booster shot were similar to that of the two-shot primary series. Fatigue and pain at the injection site were the most commonly reported side effects, and overall, most side effects were mild to moderate.

Am I still considered "fully vaccinated" if I don't get a booster shot?

Yes. Everyone is still considered fully vaccinated two weeks after their second dose in a two-shot series with the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines, or two weeks after a single-dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

For additional information regarding CDC guidance for booster shots, please visit the **Who Is Eligible for a COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Shot?** page on the CDC website.

For information regarding booster shots for Northwestern Medicine physicians and employees, please visit the **Workforce Vaccine page** on Physician Forum and **NM Interactive** (login required). For patient vaccination information and locations, please visit the **COVID-19 Vaccines page** on the COVID-19 Resource Center at nm.org/covid-19.

NM WORKFORCE FLU AND COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

Beginning the week of October 4, flu vaccines will be available in all NM regions. Beginning the week of October 11, COVID-19 vaccines, including boosters, are expected to be offered to eligible employees.

Flu vaccination

The influenza vaccine is the best way to avoid getting and spreading the flu. Flu vaccination is mandatory for the NM workforce, and the deadline to receive it is December 1.

Please complete your seasonal influenza vaccine consent form before coming to a flu vaccination station. The consent form and the flu vaccination schedule are posted on the [Seasonal Influenza Program page](#) on NM Interactive (login required). You can also access the consent form through the NM Workforce app.

COVID-19 vaccination and booster shots

Once COVID-19 vaccine schedules are determined, members of the workforce must sign up for an appointment. Those who wish to receive a booster will need to attest to meeting the CDC guidelines for booster eligibility outlined below. More information about how to attest and sign up will be available soon.

To be eligible to receive a COVID-19 booster, you must have completed the Pfizer-BioNTech two-dose series at least six months ago, with both doses documented in your employee health record. You must also meet one of the following criteria:

- Age 65 or older
- Age 18 to 64 with an underlying medical condition
- Age 18 to 64 and at an increased risk of COVID-19 exposure and transmission due to work environment

Please note

- Only the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine will be offered at vaccination stations, as that is the only COVID-19 vaccine that has been authorized for boosters.
- Members of the workforce who are not fully vaccinated will be able to sign up for their first or second dose, as well.

COVID-19 vaccine appointments at NM clinics are for the NM workforce only, including employed and private physicians, contractors and volunteers. Many locations outside of NM also offer the COVID-19 booster including retail pharmacies.

Effective January 1, 2022, proof of COVID-19 vaccination will be required for all members of the NM workforce. Proof of COVID-19 booster is not included in the vaccine requirement at this time.

The updated CDC guidance regarding booster shots can assist in your discussions with patients. Please continue to educate patients about the importance of both COVID-19 and flu vaccination to protect themselves, their families and their communities, and to help control the spread of both illnesses this fall and winter.



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