

# Dept. of Health Services: Offers COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine booster doses

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The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) supports the recommendation that certain populations who have increased risk of exposure to or transmission of COVID-19 receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's (Pfizer) COVID-19 vaccine at least six months after having received their second dose of the Pfizer vaccine.

"Our nation's leading medical experts reviewed the available data and recommended COVID-19 vaccine booster doses be provided to some people who have received the Pfizer vaccine," said DHS Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake. "Booster doses are another tool at our disposal to stop the spread of the highly transmissible Delta variant and slow the spread of COVID-19 in communities throughout Wisconsin."

DHS recommends that the following populations **SHOULD** receive a booster dose of Pfizer at least 6 months after receiving their second dose of Pfizer in order to further strengthen their immunity:

- People 65 years and older
- All residents in long-term care
- People ages 50-64 years with certain [underlying medical conditions\(link is external\)](#):
  - Cancer
  - Chronic kidney disease
  - Chronic lung diseases, including COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), asthma (moderate-to-severe), interstitial lung disease, cystic fibrosis, and pulmonary hypertension

- Dementia or other neurological conditions
- Diabetes (type 1 or type 2)
- Down syndrome
- Heart conditions (such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathies or hypertension)
- HIV infection
- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system)
- Liver disease
- Overweight and obesity
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease or thalassemia
- Smoking, current or former
- Solid organ or blood stem cell transplant
- Stroke or cerebrovascular disease, which affects blood flow to the brain
- Substance use disorders

DHS recommends that the following populations **MAY** receive a booster dose of Pfizer at least six months after receiving their second dose of Pfizer vaccine, after considering their individual risks and benefits:

- People ages 18–49 years with certain [underlying medical conditions\(link is external\)](#) (see above)
- People ages 18–64 years who are at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of their job or institutional settings. Occupations at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission include front line essential workers and health care workers:
  - First responders (health care workers, firefighters, police, staff at congregate care facilities)
  - Education staff (teachers, support staff, childcare workers)
  - Food and agriculture workers
  - Manufacturing workers
  - Corrections workers
  - U.S. Postal Service workers
  - Public transit workers
  - Grocery store workers
  - This list could be updated in the future

At this time, the Pfizer booster authorization only applies to people whose primary series was Pfizer vaccine. People in the recommended groups who got the Moderna

or Johnson & Johnson vaccine will likely need a booster shot in the near future. More data on the effectiveness and safety of Moderna and Johnson & Johnson booster shots are expected soon.

“Booster doses are intended to help people who are vaccinated maintain the highest possible level of immune system protection for as long as possible,” said Dr. Ryan Westergaard, Chief Medical Officer for the DHS Bureau of Communicable Diseases. “It’s important to remember that all the authorized COVID-19 vaccines offer strong protection after the primary series. Getting every eligible person vaccinated continues to be our most important strategy for preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death.”

A booster dose serves a different purpose than the additional dose recommended in early August for certain immunocompromised people. The additional doses are for people with certain medical conditions or who are receiving certain treatments leaving them moderately or severely immunocompromised and who may not have built a strong enough immune response after their initial vaccine. In contrast, a “booster dose” refers to another dose of a vaccine that is given to someone who built enough protection after their initial vaccination, but then that protection decreased over time – also referred to as waning immunity. Evidence suggests that immunity is waning over time for some people who were initially well-protected by the vaccine. For those people, a booster dose will strengthen and extend their protection against infection, serious illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19.

With the high-level of disease transmission in Wisconsin, DHS continues to urge everyone who is not vaccinated to get the COVID-19 vaccine, and for all people to add additional layers of protection including masking up indoors, staying home when feeling sick, and avoiding large indoor gatherings.

For additional information about booster doses, additional doses, and help accessing your [COVID-19 vaccine record](#) to determine when you may be recommended for a booster, visit the DHS [Additional Doses and Booster Doses](#) webpage.