

UW Health: COVID-19 booster shots a normal part of vaccine lifecycle

Posted on Monday, Nov 22, 2021

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

MADISON, Wis. – The COVID-19 vaccination campaign in the United States entered a new phase last week, with all adults being eligible to boost their immunity against the virus with safe and effective vaccines.

Booster doses from Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech improved the immune protection against SARS-CoV2 back to original levels, according to clinical trial data presented by the companies in their requests for authorization to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

In the case of Pfizer, its booster shot increased protective antibodies back to 95% efficacy, similar to the protection offered by the primary vaccine series, with real-world data from other countries showed strong effectiveness in preventing severe illness, hospitalization and death, the FDA stated in its authorization announcement Friday.

The authorized booster doses for people 18 years old and older, can be given to anyone six months after completing their initial vaccine series. The FDA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have previously authorized a second dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine for all recipients of the original single dose and allowing people to choose a booster dose of any authorized COVID-19 vaccine.

The pandemic is now largely one of the unvaccinated, and to help protect them and stop new variants from developing and spreading, getting a booster dose is a powerful tool in the fight against the pandemic, according to Dr. Jim Conway, pediatric infectious disease specialist, UW Health, and professor of pediatrics, UW School of Medicine and Public Health.

“Combined with the other tools we know work, like hand washing and physical distancing, booster doses can help protect us all and maybe, just maybe, start to bring normalcy to our lives again,” he said.

It is important to note that the need for a booster dose is not a sign that the vaccines don’t work, rather it is a normal part of vaccine development, Conway said.

“We’ve seen that, like any vaccine, the COVID-19 vaccines potency wanes over time,” he said. “Like tetanus or flu, we need to periodically get additional shots to pump up our immunity; it’s completely typical and expected.”

As the holiday season draws closer, there is added emphasis on getting a booster shot, according to Conway.

“If we all act now, it could be the best holiday gift you could give your family and friends – the gift of peace and security for the ones you care about,” he said.