

Frequently Asked Questions

COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Shot

Q. What is a booster shot?

A. The COVID-19 booster shot was authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and recommended by CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices for fully vaccinated Americans who meet eligibility requirements. This authorization applies only to the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine.

Based on preliminary data, vaccine protection from COVID-19 immunization can diminish over time. The booster greatly increases antibodies against the virus that causes COVID-19.

Q. Who is eligible for the booster shot?

A. The CDC recommends:

- people 65 years and older and residents in long-term care settings **should** receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series;
- people aged 50–64 years with underlying medical conditions **should** receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series;
- people aged 18–49 years with underlying medical conditions **may** receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series, based on their individual benefits and risks; and
- people aged 18–64 years who are at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of occupational or institutional setting (such as healthcare) **may** receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series, based on their individual benefits and risks.

Q. Will the booster be the same shot as the vaccine?

A. Yes. The booster shot is an additional dose of the same vaccine.

Q. How long do I need to wait before I receive the booster shot?

A. The booster shot is for individuals who are not immunocompromised, and they can receive it 6 months after their second dose.

Q. Does my booster vaccine need to be the same brand as my initial vaccine?

A. Yes. At this time, the CDC recommends that booster doses match the original mRNA vaccines people received earlier this year.

Q. If I received the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine, can I get a booster dose?

A. Not at this time. Moderna has asked the FDA to authorize a booster of its COVID-19 vaccine, which is still under review. People who received the Moderna vaccine will likely need a booster dose. If approved, we will make the Moderna booster shot available to team members.

Q. If I received Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 Vaccine, can I get a booster dose?

- A. At this time, those who received the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine are not eligible to receive a booster shot. Health officials are still collecting data on the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine and the effectiveness and need for a booster shot.

This is because the Johnson & Johnson vaccine rollout did not start until several months after the Pfizer vaccinations began. People who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine will likely need a booster dose, and more information is expected in the coming weeks. The CDC will keep the public informed with a timely plan for booster shots, if approved.

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

- A. No. COVID-19 vaccines are working very well to prevent severe illness, hospitalization and death, even against the widely circulating Delta variant. However, with the Delta variant, public health experts are starting to see reduced protection against mild and moderate disease. The booster shot will help vaccinated people maintain protection.

COVID-19 Third Dose

Q. What is the third dose of the Pfizer vaccine?

- A. If it has been less than 6 months from the time you became fully vaccinated and you are immunocompromised, you may qualify for a third dose, which was approved by federal officials in August. Sometimes people who are moderately to severely immunocompromised do not build enough protection when they first get a vaccination. When this happens, getting another dose of the vaccine may help them build more protection against the disease. The third dose, as the booster dose, is the exact same vaccine.

Q. How long do I have to wait before I receive my third dose?

- A. CDC recommends moderately to severely immunocompromised people consider receiving a third dose at least 28 days after the completion of the initial 2-dose mRNA COVID-19 vaccine series.

Our Johnson City Mall Community Vaccination Center (CVC) as well as many BHMA offices are currently providing the third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to anyone who meets the immunocompromised criteria released by CDC and ACIP. The CVC is located by the former Goody's entrance near Forever 21. The center is open weekly on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Ballad Health COVID-19 Vaccination Point of Dispensing (POD) Sites

Q. Who is eligible for the booster shot offered through Ballad Health's vaccination PODs?

- A. Team members who received both doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine at least 6 months ago are eligible to receive a booster shot.

This includes team members, medical staff members, our outsourced service providers such as Ensemble and Morrison Healthcare, and credentialed providers who have privileges at one of our hospitals. It also includes volunteers who are working within Ballad Health and members of Ballad Health's board of directors and foundation board members who meet the criteria.

Q. Will PODs be open to family members and the community?

A. No. When Ballad Health initially opened our community vaccination centers, few places were offering vaccinations because of limited supply. To make COVID-19 vaccines accessible as quickly as possible, we opened vaccination centers to the community using vaccines we received as a healthcare provider. Today, vaccines are more readily available through our Johnson City Mall community vaccination site, retail pharmacies, health departments and other vaccine providers to help meet community demand.

Additionally, with the surge of COVID-19 hospitalizations, we are already facing serious staffing challenges. We need to reserve our staffing to support critical care for patients across our health system.

Q. Will hospital PODs be open to nursing and medical students within Ballad Health?

A. No, however, nursing and medical students can receive their vaccinations at our Johnson City Mall Community Vaccination Center or from other community vaccine providers. The CVC is located by the former Goody's entrance near Forever 21. The center is open weekly on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Q. How long will the PODs be open for booster shots?

A. The hospital PODs will open for three weeks. You can visit these PODs anytime during their scheduled operating days and hours starting September 27. Hours of operation vary by POD, so please review the schedule. PODs may extend their days or hours during the three weeks, if needed, and those new hours will be communicated. If you are unable to make it during these hours, you may also receive your booster dose at our Johnson City Mall CVC, any retail pharmacy or health department.

Q. Do I need to make an appointment to receive my booster shot at the POD?

A. No. PODs will accept walk-ins during their scheduled hours of operation. However, some departments may coordinate scheduling within their teams to help ensure coverage of their work areas.

Q. Will PODs offer first, second, or third doses of the vaccine?

A. Yes. PODs will make available first and second doses for those not fully immunized, and third doses of the vaccine for team members who are immunocompromised. However, since these PODs are only scheduled to remain open for three weeks, team members who receive the first dose of the vaccine will need to make arrangements with their provider or a retail vaccine provider to receive the second dose.

Q. For my booster shot, do I have to return to the same POD where I received my COVID-19 vaccination?

A. Regardless of where you received your first and second dose, you can get your booster shot at any of the PODs during their scheduled days and hours.

Q. Do I need to show proof of vaccination to get the booster shot or third dose?

A. Yes. At your first vaccination appointment, you should have received a vaccination card that tells you what COVID-19 vaccine you received, the date you received it and where you received it. Bring this vaccination card with you to receive the booster shot and have it noted on your record.

Q. What if I didn't receive a vaccination card when I got my vaccine?

A. If you received your vaccine with Ballad Health, you can provide another proof of vaccination such as your immunization record within MyChart or we can validate your vaccination within our system. We would also provide you with a card at that time. If you received the vaccine at the health department, a retail pharmacy or other vaccine provider, you should reach out directly to them to obtain your card or proof of vaccination before receiving your booster shot or second or third dose from our health system.

Q. What if I've lost my vaccination card?

A. If you were vaccinated by Ballad Health, you can find your immunization record within MyChart. You may also call Medical Records for a copy of your immunization record.

Q. Is there a charge to receive the booster shot or first, second or third doses of the COVID-19 vaccine?

A. If you receive a booster shot or the first, second or third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine through any of our vaccine PODs, there is no cost to you.

Q. What are the side effects of the third dose or booster shot?

A. Preliminary data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that side effects of the third shot are similar to what one would experience after receiving the two-dose series, which might include fatigue and pain at the injection site. Overall, most symptoms are mild to moderate and might include tiredness, headache, muscle pain and flu-like symptoms.