

# “ Do I need a COVID booster? When should I get it? ”



## Why are booster doses important?

COVID-19 booster doses are important for people 12 and older because they build back and strengthen protection. Two COVID vaccine doses give you important protection. But this protection drops over time and 2 doses do not protect as well against new variants.

Getting boosters will give you the best protection from:

- ✓ Getting COVID
- ✓ Spreading COVID
- ✓ Getting so sick from COVID that you have to go to hospital
- ✓ Dying from COVID

Getting boosters is common. For example, people get 4 vaccines for polio in the first 18 months of life and a tetanus vaccine booster is recommended every ten years.

## How many vaccine doses do I need?

The number of vaccine doses recommended for you depends on your age, your living situation, and whether you have a weakened immune system.

In Ontario, experts recommend:

- » Most children 6 months to 11 years should get 2 vaccine doses. Children who have a weakened immune system\*\* should get 3 doses;
- » Most people 12 to 17 years should get 3 vaccine doses;
- » Most people 18 to 59 years should get 3 vaccine doses and can consider a fourth dose;
- » Most adults who are First Nations, Inuit and Métis, and adults who live with them, should get 3 doses and can consider a fourth dose;
- » Most people 60 years and older should get 4 vaccine doses;
- » Most older people living in congregate settings should get 4 doses;
- » People 12 and older who have a weakened immune system\*\* should get 5 doses.

\*\* This includes people who have certain genetic disorders (e.g. common variable immunodeficiency) and people who have health conditions (e.g. advanced HIV) or take certain medications (e.g. cancer chemotherapy).

## COVID-19 vaccine doses for people who do not have a weakened immune system\*\*

Age	Initial doses		First booster	Second booster
	1st dose	2nd dose	3rd dose	4th dose
6 months - 11	✓	✓		
12 - 17	✓	✓	✓	
18+ and First Nations, Inuit or Métis or live with someone who is First Nations, Inuit, or Métis	✓	✓	✓	✓
18 - 59	✓	✓	✓	✓
60+	✓	✓	✓	✓

\*\* Includes people who have certain genetic disorders (e.g. common variable immunodeficiency), health conditions (e.g. advanced HIV), or take medications that affect the immune system (e.g. cancer chemotherapy).

- ✓ Recommended vaccine doses
- ✓ People in this group are eligible for and can consider a second booster dose in Ontario.  
Recommendations may be different in other parts of Canada and around the world.

## COVID-19 vaccine doses for people who have a weakened immune system\*\*

Age	Initial doses			First booster	Second booster
	1st dose	2nd dose	3rd dose	4th dose	5th dose
6 months - 11	✓	✓	✓		
12 - 17	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18+ and First Nations, Inuit or Métis or live with someone who is First Nations, Inuit, or Metis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18 - 59	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
60+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

\*\* Includes people who have certain genetic disorders (e.g. common variable immunodeficiency), health conditions (e.g. advanced HIV), or take medications that affect the immune system (e.g. cancer chemotherapy).

✓ Recommended vaccine doses

Recommendations may be different in other parts of Canada and around the world.

## When can I get the first booster ?

You can get your first booster as soon as 3 months (84 days) after your second dose (or third dose if you have a weakened immune system). For people between 12 and 17 years old, waiting 6 months after your second dose (or third dose if you have a weakened immune system) is recommended. Longer spacing between vaccine doses will give you stronger, longer lasting protection.



## When can I get the second booster?

If you are 18 and older, you can get a second booster as soon as 3 months (84 days) after your first booster. Waiting 5 months (140 days) to get a second booster is recommended. If you are between 12 and 17 and you have a weakened immune system, you can get a second booster 6 months (168 days) after your first booster. For most people, the second booster will be your fourth vaccine dose. It will be your fifth vaccine dose if you have a weakened immune system.

## What vaccines are recommended as booster doses?

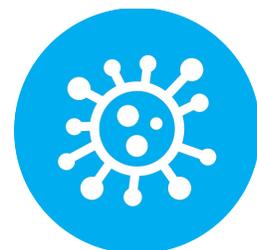
The Moderna and Pfizer COVID vaccines are recommended. They are safe and approved as boosters. They are both mRNA vaccines. Their ingredients are very similar, and they work in the same way. The Moderna vaccine contains a higher dose of mRNA than Pfizer. For most people who get a Moderna booster, the booster dose will be half the original dose.

It is safe and effective to mix and match Moderna and Pfizer vaccines to get all recommended doses. For people younger than 30, the Pfizer vaccine is preferred. This is because rare side effects called myocarditis and pericarditis have happened more after the Moderna vaccine, especially in younger males.

Booster doses of the Novavax (Nuvaxovid™) vaccine can be given to adults who may not receive mRNA vaccines. The Novavax vaccine is a protein subunit vaccine.

## Do I still need boosters if I already had COVID?

Yes. You should get all recommended vaccine doses, even if you had a COVID infection. Getting all recommended vaccine doses will make sure you have the strongest, longest lasting protection.



It is safe to get a booster as soon as you are feeling better and your isolation period has ended. Experts recommend waiting 3 months after you had COVID to get a booster.

## I am between 18 and 59 years old. Should I get a second booster?

In Ontario, people between 18 and 59 can get a second booster, but second booster doses have not yet been recommended for this age group. You can get a second booster now, or wait until the fall. Here are some things to consider:

- » **Your risk of getting COVID-19:** If you are at higher risk of getting COVID-19, you may decide to get a second booster sooner. You may also be at higher risk if you work in a crowded setting, or if there is a lot of COVID spreading in your community.
- » **Your risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19:** If you are at higher risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19, you may decide to get a second booster sooner. Your risk of serious illness is higher if you are older, are pregnant or have an intellectual disability. It is higher if you have other health conditions (e.g. diabetes, kidney problems, heart problems), or have a weakened immune system.
- » **The risk of serious illness for people you live with or see often:** Vaccines lower the risk of getting and spreading COVID-19. If you live with or are in regular contact with someone who is at higher risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19, you may decide to get a second booster sooner.
- » **How long it has been since your first booster dose:** Studies suggest that the protection from your first booster starts to drop after about 6 months.
- » **How much protection a second booster will give:** At this time, we know that a second booster dose gives extra protection for people at higher risk of serious illness. We don't know how much extra protection a second booster dose gives to younger people, and people without other health problems. We also don't know how long the extra protection will last
- » **The possibility of new vaccines:** Newer vaccines that target the Omicron variants are being studied. We don't know when they will be available. We don't know what spacing between doses will be recommended.

Dr. Thomas Piggott, the Medical Officer of Health for Peterborough Public Health, made a video to help people between 18 and 59 think about second boosters. Watch the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqkdT1c7CMU&t=203s>

Speak to your family doctor if you would like advice for your situation.

## What if I'm pregnant?

Getting a COVID booster is especially important if you are pregnant. Getting COVID when you are pregnant can cause serious problems for you and your baby. A booster can prevent those complications and lower the risk of your newborn getting COVID.



## Should I wait for new vaccines that target the Omicron variant?

New vaccines against the Omicron variant are being studied. We don't yet know how well these vaccines will work. We don't know if or when they will be available. We do know that current vaccines protect against serious illness and death. Getting all recommended doses as soon as possible will give you the best protection.

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For the most up-to-date information about COVID boosters and booking appointments, visit learn more about COVID-19 boosters, visit <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/getting-covid-19-vaccine#who-can-get-vaccinated>. You may be able to get a booster at your pharmacy, your family doctor's office or at a public health clinic.

To learn more about COVID boosters, visit <https://uwaterloo.ca/pharmacy/sites/ca.pharmacy/files/uploads/files/covid-19-boosters-faq.pdf>.

Learn more from the Ontario Ministry of Health about "Staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccines: recommended doses" and "COVID-19 Booster Recommendations" by visiting [https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/vaccine/COVID\\_19\\_vaccine\\_up\\_to\\_date.pdf](https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/vaccine/COVID_19_vaccine_up_to_date.pdf) and [https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/vaccine/COVID-19\\_vaccine\\_third\\_dose\\_recommendations.pdf](https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/vaccine/COVID-19_vaccine_third_dose_recommendations.pdf).

**Remember: While COVID continues to be common in Ontario, there are things you can do to protect yourself and others.**

- ✓ Get all vaccine doses that are recommended for you.
- ✓ If you feel sick, stay home.
- ✓ Wear a well-fitted mask in indoor public spaces.
- ✓ Gather outdoors whenever possible.
- ✓ Breathe clean air: open windows, keep the furnace fan "on", and use air filters