October 22, 2021

CDC Expands Eligibility for COVID-19 Booster Shots

Thursday, October 21, 2021, CDC Director Rochelle P. Walensky, M.D., M.P.H., endorsed the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices’ (ACIP) recommendation for a booster shot of COVID-19 vaccines in certain populations. The Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) authorization and CDC’s recommendation for use are important steps forward as we work to stay ahead of the virus and keep Americans safe.

For individuals who received a Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, the following groups are eligible for a booster shot at 6 months or more after their initial series:

- 65 years and older
- Age 18+ who live in long-term care settings
- Age 18+ who have underlying medical conditions
- Age 18+ who work or live in high-risk settings

Additionally, booster shots are recommended for everyone 18 and older at least 2 months after receiving their J&J/Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine.

Eligible individuals may choose which vaccine they receive as a booster dose. Some people may have a preference for the vaccine type that they originally received and others, may prefer to get a different booster. CDC’s recommendations now allow for this type of mix and match dosing for booster shots.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Will booster shots be the same formulation as existing vaccines?
A: Yes, COVID-19 booster shots are the same formulation as the current COVID-19 vaccines. However, in the case of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine booster shot, it is half the dose of the vaccine people get for their initial series.

Q: Will providers accept anyone who says they’re eligible to receive a booster shot? Will people need to show a doctor’s note/prescription or other documentation?
A: Individuals can self-report that they are eligible and receive a booster shot wherever vaccines are offered. This will help ensure there are not additional barriers to access for this vulnerable population receiving their booster shot.

Q: Does this change the definition of “fully vaccinated” for those eligible for booster shots?
A: No. At this time, people are still considered fully vaccinated two weeks after their second
dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or two weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as the J&J/Janssen vaccine.

Q: Where will boosters be available?
A: For those eligible, getting a booster shot is convenient, and as simple as visiting your local pharmacy or doctor’s office. If you are unable to get the booster at your original vaccine location, vaccines.gov can make the process easier. This free resource provides accurate and up-to-date information about vaccination services in your area. You can also text your zip code to 438829, or call 1-800-232-0233 to find locations near you in the U.S.

Q: Is it safe to co-administer COVID-19 vaccines with other vaccines, like flu?
A: Yes, if a patient is eligible, both flu and COVID-19 vaccines can be administered at the same visit, as recommended by CDC and ACIP. In addition to flu vaccine, COVID-19 vaccine can be given with other vaccines as well.

Should you have additional questions, please call the Maine Immunization Program at 207-287-3746.