

COVID-19 Bivalent Booster

Frequently Asked Questions

Why should I get vaccinated for COVID-19?

Getting the vaccine will lower your chances of getting COVID-19 or experiencing severe illness and help protect yourself, your family and your community. You can spread COVID-19 without feeling sick. It will also help stop the pandemic. The more people who get vaccinated, the less opportunity COVID-19 has to spread.

What are COVID-19 vaccine bivalent boosters?

The new booster is a bivalent vaccine, meaning it targets two versions of the coronavirus: the original strain and the Omicron subvariants BA.4 and BA.5. The previous booster shot only targeted the original strain.

What are the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron subvariants?

The BA.4 and BA.5 lineages of the omicron variant are currently causing most cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. and are predicted to circulate this fall and winter. Targeting these subvariants can increase protection that may have waned since the original vaccinations were received.

Who will be eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine bivalent booster?

After receiving authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended the Pfizer-BioNTech booster for anyone five or older who received an initial vaccination or booster shot at least two months ago. Those who are six or older can get the Moderna vaccine if it has been at least two months since their last vaccination.

When will the bivalent booster be available?

The new boosters are currently available in pharmacies across the U.S. Contact your local Genoa pharmacy to learn more.

What is the difference between the Pfizer and Moderna boosters?

There is no practical difference between shots, beyond the difference in age criteria.

Will the bivalent boosters replace the other current boosters?

People who have not yet received their first doses of the vaccine will still receive the original vaccines that were rolled out in late 2020. However, the new bivalent boosters are now the only boosters available.

Does the new booster offer better protection than past ones?

Based on the data supporting the vaccine authorizations, the new boosters are expected to provide increased protection against the Omicron variant of COVID-19.

What is the recommendation for other age groups?

The Pfizer bivalent booster is currently approved for ages five and older, and the Moderna bivalent booster is approved for ages six and older. Once data for other age groups is available and the FDA authorizes boosters for pediatric groups, there will be additional guidance from the CDC.

How do I know the vaccine is safe?

The U.S. vaccine safety system ensures that all vaccines, including the recently COVID-19 vaccines authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), are as safe as possible. Infectious disease experts compared the process of creating the new boosters to that of the annual flu shot, which is updated each year.

What are the vaccine side effects?

The new boosters may cause similar side effects that were reported by those who received the original mRNA COVID-19 vaccines. It is common to have pain, redness or swelling on the arm you receive the shot in (similar to other vaccines like the flu shot). Some people have no additional side effects, while others may feel tired, get a headache or experience short-term fever and/or chills. Side effects generally resolve in one to three days.

I already had COVID-19. Should I get the updated booster?

Yes, those who have already had COVID-19 can be vaccinated. You should wait until you recover from your illness and no longer need to be in isolation. The CDC also advises that those who recently had a COVID-19 infection may consider delaying vaccination and booster immunizations by three months after symptoms began or receiving a positive test.

Can I get my flu shot at the same time as my new booster?

Yes, both COVID-19 and the flu are circulating. Getting both vaccines can prevent severe disease from both viruses.

Get your COVID-19 booster shot at Genoa. Visit www.genoahealthcare.com to find a pharmacy near you.

(Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Food and Drug Administration)