Minnesota Department of Health

# Talking Points: CDC recommendation for additional dose of COVID-19 vaccine dose for certain immunocompromised people

UPDATED 8/19/2021 – 4:30 p.m.

## Key messages

* CDC now recommends that people with certain immunocompromising conditions get an additional dose of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. We have clear data to show that people who are moderately to severely immunocompromised may not develop a good immune response from two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. An additional dose may improve protection.
* This update does not change recommendations for those who are not immunocompromised, including fully vaccinated people who are otherwise healthy.
* At this time, CDC does not recommend additional doses or booster shots for any other population. Evidence for the need for booster doses in the rest of the population is growing and more information will be coming. Planning is underway to start giving booster doses as soon as FDA authorizes it and CDC’s immunization advisory committee recommends it.
* People should talk to their health care provider about their medical condition, and whether getting an additional dose is appropriate for them.

## FAQ

**Why will immunocompromised people be able to get an additional dose now and not others?**

* We have data to show that certain people who have a compromised immune system may not develop a good immune response to the first two doses of Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines. This means they have a lower amount of protection to begin with. A third dose may help improve protection.
* This update does not change recommendations for those who are not immunocompromised, including fully vaccinated people who are otherwise healthy.
* At this time, CDC does not recommend additional doses or booster shots for any other population. Evidence for the need for booster doses in the rest of the population is growing and more information will be coming. Planning is underway to start giving booster doses as soon as FDA authorizes it and CDC’s immunization advisory committee recommends it.

**Is this a booster dose for immunocompromised people?**

* No, this is a recommendation for certain immunocompromised people to get an additional dose of vaccine in order to improve the immune response. This is actually different from a booster dose which is given to bump up immunity that as declined after being fully vaccinated. For immunocompromised people, we have data to show that two doses of mRNA vaccine is not enough doses for them to develop a good immune response. So, their protection is lower from the start. An additional dose can improve their protection.
* Data is still being gathered and evaluated on the need for booster doses in the rest of the population eligible for vaccine. For now, those eligible to get vaccinated should get the recommended one or two doses depending on the type of vaccine you get.
* Overall, COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. They are very good at preventing severe disease and death from COVID-19.

**What’s the definition of immunocompromised? Who’s included?**

* Currently, CDC is recommending that moderately to severely immunocompromised people receive an additional dose. This includes people who have:
  + Been receiving active cancer treatment for tumors or cancers of the blood.
  + Received an organ transplant and are taking medicine to suppress the immune system.
  + Received a stem cell transplant within the last 2 years or are taking medicine to suppress the immune system.
  + Moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency (such as DiGeorge syndrome, Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome).
  + Advanced or untreated HIV infection.
  + Active treatment with high-dose corticosteroids or other drugs that may suppress your immune response.
* People should talk to their health care provider about their medical condition, and whether getting an additional dose is appropriate for them.

**When is this additional dose for immunocompromised people recommended?**

* People with moderately to severely compromised immune systems should receive an additional dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine at least 28 days after their second dose.
* This additional dose should be the same product (either Moderna or Pfizer for now) that you received when you were initially vaccinated.

**Where will immunocompromised people get vaccinated?**

* Your health care provider will likely be the best place. Providers will be able to review their patient’s medical records and reach out to those who are recommended to get an additional dose to let them know when and where they can get vaccinated.
* If you have questions, talk to your health care provider about your medical condition.
* We are working with providers to ensure they are able to start vaccinating people in this population as soon as feasible.

**Can you mix and match the vaccines?**

* For people who received either the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine series, a third dose of the same mRNA vaccine should be used. A person should not receive more than three mRNA vaccine doses.
* If the mRNA vaccine product given for the first two doses is not available or is unknown, either mRNA COVID-19 vaccine product may be administered.

**What should immunocompromised people who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine do?**

* The FDA’s recent EUA amendment only applies to the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, as does CDC’s recommendation.
* Data is still being gathered and reviewed on the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. This data includes whether people who received the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine also have an improved antibody response following an additional dose of the same vaccine.

**Once they get an additional dose, can immunocompromised people stop doing other prevention strategies?**

* Even after an additional dose, people should continue following prevention measures, like:
  + Wearing a mask.
  + Staying 6 feet apart from others they don’t live with.
  + Avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces until advised otherwise by their health care provider.

**Will this cause a shortage of vaccine for others? Do we have enough vaccine?**

* Minnesota is prepared to begin offering additional doses to people who are immunocompromised.
* There are plenty of vaccine doses in the state to vaccinate this population along with others who are eligible to get vaccinated. Providers are able to order more vaccine as they need it.

**I’m not eligible for an additional dose, but I’m concerned about Delta -- what should I do?**

* The recent increase in COVID-19 cases and spread of the Delta variant underscores the importance of everyone who is eligible getting vaccinated as soon as they can. The more people are vaccinated, the more protection we will have in our communities to help protect those who are not able to get vaccinated or who do not respond as well to the vaccine.
* We all need to continue using all of the prevention strategies we have to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This means getting vaccinated when you are able, wearing a mask when recommended, getting tested when needed, staying home if sick, and washing your hands often.

## More information

* COVID-19 Vaccines for Moderately to Severely Immunocompromised People (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/immuno.html>)