FAQs: COVID-19 vaccine additional doses for people with compromised immune systems

What has the FDA approved?
The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has authorized an additional third dose (sometimes called a "booster") of the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines for a limited number of people with certain conditions that severely weaken their immune systems.

What about the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?
The authorization for an additional dose applies at this time only to the two-dose mRNA vaccines (those manufactured by Pfizer and Moderna), and not to the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine. The FDA and CDC are working to provide guidance on this issue.

Can anyone get the additional dose?
No. The additional doses are only available to people with certain conditions that compromise their immune systems. Additional doses are not authorized for the general public.

Who can get an additional dose?
Following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), only people with specified immuno-compromised conditions are authorized to receive a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine. 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 two years or are taking medicine to suppress the immune system;
• moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency (such as DiGeorge syndrome, Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome);
• people with advanced or untreated HIV infection.
➢ View the complete list of conditions approved by the CDC HERE.

What medications meet the eligibility requirements for an additional dose?
For a list of most of these medications, click HERE.
(https://hhchealth.org/File Library/Health and Community/PDFs/Immunocompromized-med-list.pdf)

Who is NOT eligible for the additional dose?
Anyone who is not experiencing moderate to severe immune compromise due to a medical condition, or taking immunosuppressive medications or treatments. Anyone who is not immunocompromised, including caregivers of immunocompromised individuals, is not authorized and should not get an additional dose. If you have questions about whether to get an additional COVID-19 vaccine shot, please contact your doctor.

Revised 08-16-2021 6:30 p.m.
**What if I am not sure whether I am eligible for an additional dose?**
If you are uncertain about whether your immune system is moderately or severely compromised and you are eligible for an additional dose, please contact your doctor. If your doctor believes you are eligible for an additional dose of COVID-19 vaccine, your doctor can provide you with a note stating that you meet the conditions to receive the additional dose. Please bring this note with you when you arrive for your additional vaccination.

**Do I need a doctor’s note in order to get the extra dose?**
No, a doctor’s note or referral is not required. You will be required to sign an attestation, which will become part of your medical record, stating that you meet the CDC’s requirements for receiving an additional dose.

**What age groups are eligible for the vaccine?**
The age groups authorized to receive the additional dose are the same as for the primary vaccination series:
- Pfizer/BioNTech: 12 years and older
- Moderna: 18 years and older

**How soon should I get the additional dose?**

**How long should I wait after my second dose?**
The FDA authorizes immunocompromised individuals to receive a third dose at least 28 days following the second dose of the same vaccine. If you are immunocompromised and received your second dose more than 28 days ago, you can get a third dose.

**Where should I get the additional dose?**
Hartford HealthCare’s locations and hours are listed on our website. Just visit HartfordHealthCare.org/vaccine. These additional vaccines are also available from pharmacies and at other locations; please check those websites.

**What do I do in order to get an additional vaccine shot at Hartford HealthCare?**
- Additional doses are available to only eligible people, per CDC guidance, at all Hartford HealthCare vaccination sites. Appointments are recommended but walk-ins are welcome. A list of vaccination locations and hours of operation is HERE (HartfordHealthCare.org/vaccine)
- People requesting an additional dose will be required to:
  - Provide verification of their first two doses of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine; the third dose will be the same type as the first two
  - Attest or show that it has been at least 28 days since their last dose of COVID-19 vaccine
  - Either:
    - Sign an attestation that they meet the criteria set by the CDC (meaning they have one of the conditions listed HERE) (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/immuno.html)
• Or provide a note from their physician stating that they meet the conditions to receive the additional dose

**What kind of vaccine should I get?**
Additional doses of vaccine should be the same type of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine as you received before. This means if you previously received Pfizer vaccine, you should receive an additional dose of Pfizer; if you received Moderna vaccine, you should receive an additional dose of Moderna. However, if the mRNA COVID-19 vaccine product given for the first two doses is not available, the other mRNA COVID-19 vaccine product may be administered as the additional dose.

**Can I get more than one additional dose?**
No. A person should not receive more than three mRNA COVID-19 vaccine doses at this time.

**Should I have an antibody test before I get the additional dose?**
No, this is not required.

**What kind of side effects should I anticipate if I get an additional dose of vaccine?**
Preliminary studies show the side effects appear to be similar to the initial vaccine reactions, although they may be more pronounced. These may include pain, redness and swelling at the injection site, as well as tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever and nausea. So far, there have not been serious side effects to additional dosing, but we will monitor patients closely.

**In general, what is a booster?**
It is an additional dose of vaccine to boost the body’s immune response to a virus. For example, most children receive routine vaccinations, including boosters, for illnesses such as chickenpox, tetanus, diphtheria, mumps, measles, and rubella. The COVID-19 vaccine additional dose is not a live vaccine and can be safely administered to immunocompromised people.

**Why get an additional dose?**
Studies have found evidence of reduced immune response to a two-dose primary mRNA COVID-19 vaccine series in some groups of immunocompromised people. In addition, reduced vaccine effectiveness has been observed in immunocompromised participants compared to participants who are not immunocompromised in a limited number of studies. Immunocompromised people also may have a higher rate of breakthrough COVID-19 infections than the general population.