

COVID-19 booster shot eligibility expands to additional individuals and vaccines

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The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) continues to follow the guidance of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concerning administration of COVID-19 vaccine, including boosters. Guidance is being given to entities giving COVID-19 vaccine through ADPH's Health Alert Network and other educational resources.

CDC Director Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky endorsed the CDC ACIP recommendation for a booster shot of COVID-19 vaccines in certain populations. This follows the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) decision on October 20 to amend the emergency use authorizations (EUA) for COVID-19 vaccines to allow for the use of a single booster dose. Booster dose recommendations for all three available COVID-19 vaccines in the United States have been made, and CDC's recommendations now allow for mix and match dosing for booster shots.

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:

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

For the nearly 15 million individuals who received the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine, booster shots are also recommended for those who are 18 and older and who were vaccinated two or more months ago. The vaccine given as the booster can be either the Pfizer, Moderna, or J & J COVID-19 vaccine.

Guidance was provided by the FDA on the use of each of the available COVID-19 vaccines as a mix and match booster dose in eligible individuals, as defined above, following completion of primary vaccination with a different available COVID-19 vaccine. Some persons may prefer receiving a booster using the same vaccine received for their primary series while others may prefer receiving a booster using a different vaccine. For those receiving boosters with the Moderna product, half doses are to be given.

According to CDC, current available data show that all three approved or authorized COVID-19 vaccines continue to be highly effective in reducing risk of severe disease, hospitalization and death, even against the widely circulating Delta variant. Vaccination continues to be the best way to protect yourself, reduce the spread of the virus, and help prevent new variants from emerging.

As cooler weather and holiday celebrations approach, COVID-19 mitigation practices such as indoor masking should continue to be followed. Also, as we are starting to see flu cases, ADPH would like to make sure that individuals know that influenza (flu) vaccines and COVID-19 vaccines can be given at the same time. Co-administration is allowable and is not contraindicated. Additional information on the CDC's recommendation for a booster dose is available at [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html)