



## Chester County Health Department COVID-19 Third Dose Frequently Asked Questions

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Created: August 13, 2021  
Updated: September 24, 2021

### **Recent News**

On 9/24, the CDC approved BOOSTER doses of the Pfizer vaccine based on recommendations from the FDA and two, independent advisory panels.

On 8/13, THIRD doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were approved for individuals with weakened immune systems.

### **Who's eligible for boosters right now?**

The CDC recommended booster shots for certain people who received the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose of the Pfizer vaccine at least 6 months ago. This includes:

- Older adults, age 65 and over and those living in long-term care facilities SHOULD receive a booster dose.
- Adults ages 50-64 at high risk of severe COVID-19, due to [underlying medical conditions](#) such as cancer, chronic lung disease, diabetes, and heart conditions, among others SHOULD receive a booster dose.
- Adults ages 18-49 at high risk of severe COVID-19 due to [underlying medical conditions](#) MAY receive a booster dose.
  - It is important to talk with your doctor about your specific medical history, and your individual risks before scheduling an appointment.
- Adults age 18-64, whose jobs put them at high risk for COVID-19 MAY receive a booster dose.
  - This includes healthcare workers, teachers, daycare staff, grocery workers, and other essential workers, along with people in shelters and prisons
  - It is important to consider your individual exposures, benefits, and risks individual risks before scheduling an appointment

### **Who's eligible for a 3<sup>rd</sup> dose right now?**

People who received Pfizer or Moderna at least 28 days ago and have immunocompromised conditions including:

- Active or recent treatment for solid tumor and hematologic malignancies
- Receipt of solid-organ or recent hematopoietic stem cell transplants
- Severe primary immunodeficiency
- Advanced or untreated HIV infection
- Active treatment with high-dose corticosteroids, alkylating agents, antimetabolites, tumor-necrosis (TNF) blockers, and other biologic agents that are immunosuppressive or immunomodulatory



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- Chronic medical conditions such as asplenia and chronic renal disease may be associated with varying degrees of immune deficit

### **What's the difference between a booster and a 3<sup>rd</sup> dose?**

- **BOOSTER DOSE:** Booster doses are for people who built enough protection after their original vaccination. Sometimes, a vaccine's protection can wear off over time (this is called waning immunity) and at that point, a "booster" dose is needed to bring protection levels back up.
  - Booster doses can be administered 6 months after the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose of the Pfizer vaccine.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> DOSE:** 3<sup>rd</sup> doses are for people with weakened immune systems, who DID NOT build enough protection after their original vaccination. The 3<sup>rd</sup> dose helps people with weakened immune systems build protection similar to what most people got with their original vaccination.
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> doses can be administered 28 days after the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose of the Pfizer OR Moderna vaccine

### **When will booster doses for Moderna and Johnson & Johnson be available?**

- A separate booster recommendation for individuals who received Johnson & Johnson or Moderna vaccines are expected soon.
- Currently, it is NOT recommended to receive a vaccine different than your first vaccine.

### **Does my vaccine still work? Why are booster shots recommended now?**

- Yes. The main purpose of all approved COVID-19 vaccines is to prevent severe illness and the worst outcomes of COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccines used in the U.S. still offer strong protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death.
- However, with the Delta variant, data shows a rise in breakthrough infections, causing mild to moderate illness, and a smaller increase in hospitalizations among vaccinated individuals.
- People with "breakthrough" cases can spread COVID-19 to others, even if they do not have symptoms.

### **Why are booster shots only recommended for certain groups?**

- The elderly, those in long-term care facilities, people with underlying medical conditions, and adults with occupational and institutional exposures to COVID-19 are at increased risk for severe illness.
- Difference in immune response:



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- People's responses to their initial vaccination vary. Younger people, for example, tend to produce more antibodies to begin with than older adults. That means months later when levels have naturally declined, some people may still have enough antibodies to fend off infection while others don't.
- Underlying health conditions can put people at higher risk for severe COVID-19
- Occupational or Institutional exposures can put people at higher risk for severe COVID-19

### **What kind of side effects might I experience after a third dose or booster dose?**

- Side effects after a third or booster dose are similar to those of the two-dose series. The most common symptoms include fatigue and pain at the injection site. Most symptoms were mild to moderate and typically lasted a few days.

### **Scheduling an Appointment**

- If you are eligible, booster vaccines are available throughout the County.
- You DO NOT need to go back to the Health Department or the same provider to receive your booster dose.
- Many pharmacies and other vaccine providers are ready and able to administer booster doses.
- Find a vaccine provider close to home:
  - Go to [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov)
  - Text your ZIP code to 438829
  - or Call 1-800-232-0233
- You can schedule an appointment using our [COVID-19 vaccination calendar](#)

### **What should I bring to my appointment?**

- Bring your vaccine card or a copy of your vaccination record.
- Vaccine Cards/Records will be checked at time of appointment.

### **What if I need a replacement vaccine card?**

- If you need a replacement card AND were vaccinated through the Health Department, please call 610-344-6255.
- If you received your vaccinations through another provider, please contact your vaccine provider or the Pennsylvania Department of Health. Instructions are available on our [COVID-19 vaccine information](#) page.



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**Are walk-in appointments available at the Health Department?**

- Due to cancellations, last minute appointments may become available. Check clinic calendars regularly for up-to-date availability.