



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE  
Dave A. Chokshi, MD, MSc  
*Commissioner*

November 23, 2021

Dear Colleague,

On November 19, 2021, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated their recommendations for mRNA (Pfizer or Moderna) COVID-19 booster doses for adults who completed an mRNA (Pfizer or Moderna) COVID-19 vaccine primary series at least 6 months ago.

- All people ages 50 years and older and people ages 18 years and older residing in long-term care settings **should** receive a booster dose, given increased risk of COVID-19 complications in these groups.
- All people ages 18 to 49 years **may** receive a booster dose, based on individual risk-benefit assessment.

The CDC continues to recommend that all people who received one dose of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine **should** receive a booster dose at least 2 months after receipt of primary vaccination. Any of the three vaccines authorized or approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) may be used for the booster dose. COVID-19 vaccine dosing and schedules are summarized [here](#).

Although data has shown waning mRNA vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic infection after the primary series, effectiveness against severe disease and hospitalization remains high. Updated [data](#) from approximately 10,000 participants ages 16 years and older in a Pfizer Phase 3 randomized controlled trial found the relative vaccine efficacy of the booster dose to be 95.3% against symptomatic COVID-19, with a median follow-up of 2.5 months after the booster dose. No Phase 3 booster efficacy data are available for the Moderna vaccine, but immunogenicity data demonstrate the ability to boost antibody levels in Moderna recipients. Myocarditis and other [safety](#) data after booster doses are reassuring and monitored closely.

In addition, on November 17, 2021, CDC issued Emergency Use Instructions and updated its [clinical considerations](#) to allow the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to be given as an additional primary or booster dose to certain people who completed a primary vaccine series with COVID-19 vaccines that are authorized or approved by the World Health Organization, but not by the FDA, and for COVID-19 vaccines for which a U.S. data and safety monitoring board or equivalent has independently confirmed efficacy (currently, Novavax COVID-19 vaccine).

**In New York City, no one ages 18 years and older should be turned away from receiving a booster dose if requested. On November 15, the Health Department issued a Commissioner Advisory requesting that providers reach out to high-risk patients with an indication to receive a booster dose.**

Finally, please remember that vaccination of unvaccinated individuals remains the top priority. Thank you for your commitment to promoting and protecting the health of New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jane R. Zucker'.

Jane R. Zucker, MD, MSc  
Assistant Commissioner  
Bureau of Immunization