

April 2023

## What is a COVID-19 booster dose?

Booster doses are doses of the COVID-19 vaccines received after the primary series. Booster doses restore protection from a primary series (or prior boosters) that may have decreased over time. Currently, **bivalent vaccines (e.g., those that protect against 2 variants of COVID-19)** are recommended for booster doses and are broadly available.

## Why should I care about COVID-19? I thought everyone had it already.

While most Canadians have indeed had COVID-19, it can still cause severe outcomes, even among healthy people. In 2022, COVID-19 was the leading cause of hospitalization in Canada and at any given time, thousands of Canadians are still hospitalized for COVID-19. This is why immunization remains important for managing COVID-19.

## What are the latest (March 2023) NACI recommendations on booster vaccines?

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) previously recommended in fall 2022 that most Canadians receive a booster dose with a bivalent vaccine. In March 2023, NACI made additional recommendations around a repeat booster with a bivalent vaccine. Specifically, they recommended the following individuals (who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19) receive **an additional booster dose with a bivalent vaccine**:

- Adults 80 years of age and older;
- Adult residents of long-term care homes and other congregate living settings for seniors or those with complex medical needs;
- Adults 18 years of age and older who are moderately to severely immunocompromised; and
- Adults 65-79 years of age, particularly if they have not been infected with COVID-19

## If I have had COVID-19 or been recently vaccinated, when should I get a booster?

It is recommended that you **wait 6 or more months from the last COVID-19 vaccination or COVID infection (whichever is longer)** before getting any booster vaccines.

## How effective is the booster vaccine?

The primary series of COVID-19 vaccines have shown to wane over time; however **protection against severe outcome persists longer and is quite robust**. Evidence has shown that vaccine effectiveness against severe infection (e.g., hospitalization) from booster doses is generally quite high.

## Is the booster vaccine safe?

Very safe. Bivalent booster vaccines are safe and have side effects similar to those of mRNA vaccines given for the primary series. Billions of people have received mRNA vaccines and they have been shown to be safe without long-term side effects.