

# Building Vaccine Confidence in the COVID-19 Updated Boosters



## Open the Discussion

**APPROACH** Start the conversation as early as possible with the patient.

**ASK** "Have you thought about getting the updated COVID-19 booster?"

**INTERNAL REMINDERS**

- ✓ Do not assume vaccine acceptance from the patient.
- ✓ Encourage sharing what they have been hearing, positive and negative.
- ✓ People often remember the earliest information they hear, so it is important to have this discussion early.



### Unsure

*Patient is reluctant to make a firm decision*

**APPROACH** Acknowledge and address concerns; don't provide reassurance prematurely. (See page 2 for common concerns and FAQs.)

**SAY** "Sounds like you're feeling unsure. Tell me more about what you've been hearing about receiving an updated booster."  
 "I also wondered/heard about that. Here's what I learned after looking into it."

**INTERNAL REMINDERS**

- ✓ Be empathetic and thank patient for sharing concerns.
- ✓ Link vaccine acceptance to patient hopes and goals.
- ✓ Cite your trustworthy sources of information. To facilitate trust, acknowledge uncertainty where it exists.
- ✓ Allow the patient to bring family or other community members into the decision-making process, if requested.
- ✓ Reinforce your personal decision to stay up to date on boosters.

*Patient declines booster*

### Opposed

**APPROACH** Acknowledge and ask permission to learn more. (See page 2 for common concerns and FAQs.)

**ASK** "OK, I'd like to learn more about what is most concerning to you. What concerns are keeping you from receiving an updated booster?"

**Consider the patient's unique viewpoint.** They may have concerns about requirements at work or school, breakthrough infections, misinformation, and the many different vaccine brands available.

**INTERNAL REMINDERS**

- ✓ Your influence as a messenger matters, you are viewed as a trusted source of information. Ask permission to share your recommendation.
- ✓ If you had similar questions or concerns, share your decision-making thought process.
- ✓ To facilitate trust, acknowledge uncertainty where it exists.
- ✓ Reinforce your personal decision to get vaccinated.
- ✓ Link vaccine acceptance to the patient's hopes and goals.

**FOLLOW-UP** Thank them for sharing their concerns with you and ask again about willingness to receive their updated booster.



### Inclined

*Patient is interested in receiving a booster dose*

**APPROACH** Affirm and recommend next step.

**SAY** "I'm glad we had this discussion and I appreciate that you shared your concerns with me today. Making an informed decision is important."

*Patient wants to receive a booster dose*

**ENCOURAGE AN ACTION STEP**

- ✓ Vaccinate same day, or schedule vaccine appointment.
- ✓ Ask them to read information you provide them.
- ✓ Ask them to share the information they learned to support family and friends in making the same decision, if they feel comfortable doing so.

*Patient is not interested in further discussion*

### Refusing

**APPROACH** Advise and educate (alternative resources); provide opportunity to revisit discussion and offer additional resources from trusted sources.

**SAY** "This is definitely your decision. If you have any questions at all, I am here for you."

**ASK** "Would it be helpful for me to provide more information?"

**PROVIDE INFORMATION**

- ✓ One sheet handout (variety of separate topics) addressing any concerns that may have been stated.
- ✓ Websites with culturally-appropriate information.
- ✓ Phone number to call with any questions if they want to talk later.

## Concerns & Example Responses

### They shared that they believe there is no point in getting an updated booster dose if they can still get infected.

"I understand. Although there is still a chance of breakthrough COVID-19 infection after vaccination, the vaccines were designed to prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19 and are still successful at doing so. If you do get sick after receiving an updated booster, you will still have some benefit from the vaccine because you may only get a mild case instead of a serious case. It's important to get all recommended doses available for best protection."

### They expressed concern that they don't want to be a research experiment for the new updated booster.

"I understand your hesitation. The technology used for the COVID-19 vaccines have been studied for decades. There have been over 12 billion vaccine doses administered safely worldwide and there are very strong vaccine safety systems to catch any warning signs early. Although the human trials for the updated boosters are not yet completed, there have been human trials for the Omicron BA.1 vaccine with no safety concerns. Similar to the flu vaccine, annually updated based on the circulating strains of flu and based only on animal studies, these vaccines have been reformulated with the intention of providing better protection against new variants."

## Frequently Asked Questions & Example Responses

### What is an updated/bivalent booster?

"An updated/bivalent COVID-19 booster is a vaccine formula that both boosts immunity against the original coronavirus strain and also protects against the Omicron variant that accounts for most of the current cases. Updated boosters are intended to provide optimal protection against the virus and address waning vaccine effectiveness over time."

### Why are the updated boosters important? If we need an updated booster dose, does that mean that the vaccines aren't working?

"Updated booster doses will help provide continued protection against severe disease. Booster doses were previously recommended only for populations at high risk for severe COVID-19, but the recommendation expanded to include everyone 5 years and older to help increase protection against COVID-19 illness. This is especially important with the rise of more contagious variants and cases of COVID-19 increasing across the United States."

"The current COVID-19 vaccines we have in the U.S. are working well to prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death, even against variants. However, recent studies have shown that protection may decrease over time. The updated boosters were created to help boost immunity and provide better protection from the Omicron variant. It's important to get all recommended doses available for best protection."

### How do I show that I'm eligible for an updated booster dose?

"Everyone 5 and older should receive an updated bivalent booster dose two months after completing their primary vaccine series or prior booster dose. You can self-report that you are eligible for a booster dose. You do not need to show a recommendation from a health care provider."

"Please take your vaccination card to your booster dose appointment so the provider can first confirm that you've completed the entire primary vaccine series. If you don't have your card, the provider may be able to look up your record."

### Do I have to get the same vaccine brand for my updated booster dose?

"You can get a different vaccine for your updated booster dose than the vaccine you got for your primary series or prior booster dose. The CDC made their decision following a careful review of the latest data, and robust and deliberative discussion around booster shots."

"People 5 years old may only get the Pfizer vaccine. People 6 years and older can receive an updated Pfizer or Moderna

booster. People 18 years and older can also opt to receive a Novavax booster."

### How long does protection from the updated booster last and does it protect against infection of new variants?

"Scientists are continuing to monitor how long protection lasts. Recent studies show that protection against the virus may decrease over time, but vaccines are still preventing against serious illness, hospitalizations, and death from COVID-19. The updated boosters were created to help boost immunity and provide better protection from the Omicron variant. It's important to get all recommended doses available for best protection."

### Is it safe to get the updated booster while pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding?

"Yes, it is safe and recommended for people who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding to stay up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines, including the updated booster dose. There is no evidence that the COVID-19 vaccines cause any problems with fertility or complications during pregnancy. Staying up to date provides protection against severe COVID-19 illness and may pass antibodies during pregnancy and through breastmilk to provide protection to the newborn until they are eligible for COVID-19 vaccination at 6 months old."

### Can the updated booster be received with other vaccines, like the flu?

"Yes. You can get an updated COVID-19 booster at the same time as other vaccines. You do not need to schedule required school vaccinations or other recommended vaccines separately from COVID-19 vaccination. A COVID-19 vaccine appointment is another opportunity to get caught up on all recommended vaccines."

### Should I get an updated booster even if I already had COVID-19 or received a prior booster?

"Yes, I strongly recommend you get an updated booster despite previously contracting COVID-19. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine after recovering from COVID-19 infection provides added protection to your immune system. The same is true for people who completed their primary series or received one or two boosters. For maximum effectiveness, individuals who recently had COVID-19 may consider delaying any COVID-19 vaccination, including the updated booster dose, by 3 months from the start of their symptoms or positive test."

For other frequently asked questions, visit: [doh.wa.gov/covidbooster](https://doh.wa.gov/covidbooster)

Adapted from:

1. Communication skills for the COVID vaccine. VitalTalk. [vitaltalk.org/guides/communication-skills-for-the-covid-vaccine/](https://vitaltalk.org/guides/communication-skills-for-the-covid-vaccine/). Published January 8, 2021.
2. Gagneur A. Motivational interviewing: A powerful tool to address vaccine hesitancy. *Can Commun Dis Rep*. 2020;46(4):93-97. Published 2020 Apr 2. doi:10.14745/ccdr.v46i04a06
3. Opel DJ, Lo B, Peek ME. Addressing Mistrust About COVID-19 Vaccines Among Patients of Color. *Ann Intern Med*. Published online February 9, 2021 at [acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M21-0055](https://acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M21-0055). doi:10.7326/m21-0055



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