An update on kid boosters: Suggested talking points

- **Kids as young as 6 months old are now eligible for an updated booster.**
    - If your kid is aged 6 months to 4 years and completed their three-dose Pfizer primary series two months ago, they are now eligible for a Pfizer bivalent booster. The boosters will become available as soon as the CDC issues its recommendation, which typically shortly follows FDA authorization.
    - There is one exception: If your kid received Pfizer's bivalent vaccine for the third shot of their primary series, they should still have protection against severe COVID-19 and are not yet eligible for another bivalent booster.
    - If your child is aged 6 months to 5 years and completed their two-dose Moderna primary series two months ago, they are eligible for a Moderna bivalent booster.
    - Both Pfizer's and Moderna's bivalent boosters target newer Omicron strains, helping us stay protected as immunity wanes and new COVID-19 strains become dominant.

- **COVID-19 is a leading cause of death in children, but it doesn't have to be.**
    - Compared to other infectious or respiratory diseases, COVID-19 ranks as the number one cause of death among kids, outranking the flu and pneumonia.
    - Yet only about 12 percent of kids ages 6 months to 4 years have received at least one dose of their primary COVID-19 vaccine series.
    - COVID-19 vaccines help prevent infection, hospitalization, severe illness, and death from the virus for all age groups, infants and young kids included.

- **Serious health problems after COVID-19 vaccination are rare.**
    - The COVID-19 vaccines went through clinical trials involving thousands of children and teens before being authorized and approved.
    - The clinical trials, as well as continued safety monitoring by health agencies, have determined that the authorized COVID-19 vaccines are both safe and effective.
    - Certain side effects are common after COVID-19 vaccination, but serious health problems are rare.
    - Common side effects for infants and young kids include pain where the shot was given, swollen lymph nodes, irritability or crying, sleepiness, and loss of appetite. These side effects usually go away in a few days.
    - Any risk of serious health problems for kids is understandably worrisome for parents, but it's clear that the risks of COVID-19 infection outweigh the risk of having an adverse reaction to COVID-19 vaccination.

An update on kid boosters: Frequently asked questions

1. **Is my kid eligible for a bivalent booster?**

Everyone ages 5 and older can get a bivalent booster two months after completing their primary series or after receiving their last original COVID-19 booster. If your kid is aged 6 months to 5 years and completed their two-dose Moderna primary series two months ago, they can also get a Moderna bivalent booster. The FDA recently authorized Pfizer's bivalent booster for kids under 5 as well, but it won't be available until the CDC issues its recommendation, which should come soon. If the CDC approves, kids ages 6 months to 4 years who completed their three-dose Pfizer primary series two months ago will be able to get a Pfizer bivalent booster. There is one exception: If your kid received Pfizer's bivalent vaccine for the third shot of their primary series, they are not eligible for another bivalent booster yet but should still be protected against severe cases of COVID-19.

2. **What are the risks of getting my kid vaccinated against COVID-19?**

Common side effects for infants and young kids after COVID-19 vaccination include pain where the shot was given, swollen lymph nodes, irritability or crying, sleepiness, and loss of appetite. These side effects usually go away in a few days. Serious health problems that arise from COVID-19 vaccination, such as myocarditis, seizures, and severe allergic reactions, are rare. Our COVID-19 vaccines went through clinical trials involving thousands of children and teens before being authorized and approved, and they continue to be closely monitored by health agencies for safety alerts. It's understandable for parents to be worried about any risk of health problems for their kids, no matter how mild or rare. But it's clear that the risks of COVID-19 infection outweigh the risk of having an adverse reaction to COVID-19 vaccination.

3. **Are COVID-19 vaccines still effective at this stage of the pandemic?**

Yes. The primary series continues to protect against hospitalization and death from COVID-19. But getting a bivalent booster, if you are eligible, can make a big difference in terms of protection. Bivalent boosters target newer Omicron strains, helping us stay protected as immunity wanes and new COVID-19 strains become dominant. A CDC study published in January found that a bivalent booster provided extra protection against XBB.1.5 infection for at least the first three months after receiving it. Although the spread of COVID-19 currently seems to be on the decline, the virus is still around and remains relatively unpredictable. Staying as protected as possible is the best way to approach the current stage of the pandemic.