

## What to know about fall boosters: Suggested talking points

- **Fall boosters are expected to offer better protection against BA.5.**
  - Both Pfizer's and Moderna's updated boosters are bivalent vaccines that target the original COVID-19 strain as well as the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron subvariants.
  - Pfizer's vaccine will be available for people ages 12 and older, while Moderna's will be available for people ages 18 and older.
  - The updated boosters are expected to strengthen protection against BA.5 infection and severe disease.
  - The hope is that they will also provide longer-term immunity and broader protection against future variants.
- **The new shots are just as safe as the original vaccines.**
  - The FDA did not require the updated boosters to go through the full authorization process, including human clinical trials, because they use the same foundation as the already authorized original COVID-19 vaccines.
  - This is a similar process to the one used for the flu vaccine, which is altered each year to target the strains most likely to be dominant.
  - Federal health officials stress that the updated boosters are just as safe as the original vaccines.
  - However, since the updated boosters did not go through human trials, we don't yet know how effective they will be. Pfizer and Moderna will present effectiveness data from animal trials during the CDC advisory meeting this week.
- **The updated boosters will be critical to preparing for a potential fall or winter surge.**
  - The original COVID-19 vaccines continue to be effective against severe disease, but they do not offer strong protection against Omicron infection.
  - The updated boosters will ideally provide more targeted protection against BA.5 and future circulating Omicron variants.
  - By decreasing the risk of infection, the new vaccines could also minimize hospitalizations and deaths, especially among immunocompromised individuals.
  - Staying up to date on vaccinations remains one of the best ways to protect against COVID-19.

## What to know about fall boosters: Frequently asked questions

### 1. When will updated boosters be available?

The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) is scheduled to meet on September 1 and 2 to discuss Pfizer's and Moderna's fall boosters. Once the committee gives the green light, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky will then issue the final recommendation. Given this timeline, the updated boosters could be shipped out and administered soon after Labor Day.

### 2. Who will be eligible?

Pfizer is requesting authorization of its 30-microgram bivalent vaccine for people ages 12 and older, while Moderna is requesting authorization of its 50-microgram bivalent vaccine for adults only. There is no updated booster for kids ages 6 months to 11 years yet, but Pfizer confirmed that it is [working on one for this youngest age group](#).

### 3. Will they be safe and effective?

The FDA did not require the updated boosters to go through the same authorization process as the original COVID-19 vaccines. Since the fall boosters use the same foundation as the already authorized vaccines, they do not need to go through human trials to ensure safety. This process is similar to the one used for the flu vaccine, which is altered each year to target the strains most likely to be dominant. But since the updated boosters did not go through human trials, there is a lack of data on their effectiveness. Pfizer and Moderna will present effectiveness data from animal trials during the CDC advisor meeting.