

AFSCME Facts

Vaccine Booster Shots FAQs

Is there an FDA-approved vaccine booster shot?

Yes. A single booster shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine has been approved for certain groups who previously received the first two doses of that vaccine. The booster is approved under the FDA's Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) process, which allows safe and effective medicines to be deployed on an accelerated schedule during a public health emergency such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. This is the same process that was used initially to approve the first two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, as well as the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines.

Who is eligible to get the vaccine booster shot?

Individuals can get the Pfizer-BioNTech booster shot six months or more after completing the first two doses of that vaccine if they are:

- 65 years and older.
- Age 18 and older who have certain underlying medical conditions (detailed below).
- Age 18 and older who live in long-term care settings.
- Age 18 and older who work in high-risk settings.
- Age 18 and older who live in high-risk settings.

For people 65 and older, 50-64 years old with underlying medical conditions and 18 and older residing in a long-term care setting, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) goes a step beyond saying they are eligible and *affirmatively recommends* that they get the booster shot. That is because people in these group are at increased risk of severe illness and, in the case of people living in long-term care settings, increased risk of infection. For others in the list above, CDC says they may get the booster shot after considering their individual benefits and risks.

What kinds of underlying medical conditions make someone 18 and older eligible for the booster shot?

According to the CDC, underlying medical conditions include:

• Cancer	• Heart conditions	• Pregnancy
• Chronic kidney disease	• HIV	• Smoking, current or former
• Chronic lung diseases, including COPD	• Immunocompromised state	• Solid organ or blood stem cell transplant
• Dementia or other neurological conditions	• Liver disease	• Stroke or cerebrovascular disease
• Diabetes (type 1 or type 2)	• Overweight and obesity	• Substance use disorders
• Down Syndrome	• Sickle cell disease or thalassemia	

What kinds of high-risk work and residential settings make someone 18 and older eligible for the booster shot?

People 18 and older are eligible for the booster if they work or live in high-risk settings where they frequently may be exposed to the coronavirus and therefore are put at high-risk of serious complications from the disease. The CDC has not issued a list of qualifying settings that limits who can receive the booster. Instead, the CDC has provided examples of settings and jobs that qualify.

Examples of work and residential settings that make individuals eligible for Pfizer-BioNTech booster shots include:

- Health care.
- Schools.
- Correctional facilities.
- Homeless shelters.

Examples of workers who may get Pfizer-BioNTech booster shots include:

- First responders (e.g., healthcare workers, firefighters, police, congregate care staff).
- Education staff (e.g., teachers, support staff, daycare workers).
- Corrections workers.
- Public transit workers.
- U.S. Postal Service workers.
- Food and agriculture workers.
- Grocery store workers.
- Manufacturing workers.

Are booster shots available locally, or only at special locations?

The Pfizer-BioNTech booster is available broadly throughout the country at any vaccine provider that is administering the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. This includes pharmacies, doctor offices and other providers that are administering COVID-19 vaccines. You may want to call your local provider in advance to make sure that they have the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in stock.

Are booster shots available for people who have received vaccines other than the Pfizer vaccine?

Booster shots are not yet available for people who received other vaccines, such as the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines. It is expected, however, that booster shots will be made available to them once the FDA and CDC have evaluated the safety and effectiveness of booster shots for those vaccines. Currently, the only vaccine booster shot that has been approved is the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, and that is available only to people who received the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine as their primary COVID-19 vaccine.

If we need a booster shot, does that mean that the vaccines are not working?

No. COVID-19 vaccines are working well to prevent severe illness, hospitalization and death, even against the widely circulating Delta variant. However, public health experts are starting to see reduced protection, especially among certain populations, against mild and moderate disease.