



## COVID-19 Booster Frequently Asked Questions January 14, 2022

### **Background:**

The COVID pandemic is not over, and we are in the middle of a very large surge made worse by holidays, travel, time spent indoors, and the very infectious Omicron variant. The indoor, close together and unmasked settings are particularly concerning given COVID's ability to spread rapidly, and because it is three times more contagious than the prior variant. Most COVID spread happens within the 24-48 hours period before an infected person develops any symptoms. During this period infected persons may feel healthy, yet they are actively shedding the highly contagious virus. Boosters are the best way to slow the spread of COVID, along with continuing to practice other safety measures.

Below are FAQ to address some of the ongoing questions around boosters as this topic evolves.

### **What and Why:**

**What is a booster?** Boosters are an additional dose of vaccine, intended to bolster immunity. It can be the same type of vaccine you received originally of an mRNA vaccine (Moderna or Pfizer), or it can be different: the so called 'mix and match'.

**Why do I need a booster, is my vaccine not working?** Vaccines have been very effective at reducing severe infection and reducing hospitalizations. Infections in vaccinated people are more common than originally observed, yet those infections are milder than in unvaccinated persons. Immunity can lessen overtime, and a booster keeps antibody levels higher, offering improved protection against serious infection.

**Will I need to get a booster every year, like a flu shot?** We don't know yet. COVID has less of a seasonality than does influenza.

**Will the vaccine or booster affect a COVID test?** The COVID vaccine or a boosters will not give you a positive test for COVID, nor make you contagious.

**If I get a booster, do I still have to stay masked?** Yes, currently masking requirements are in place until overall COVID activity in our communities is reduced.

**Can I get COVID if I have had a booster?** Unfortunately, yes, but any resulting illness will be mild.

**Which booster is right for me?** Both mRNA vaccines are available to be used as a booster (Moderna or Pfizer). If you have a particular risk or concern, you may benefit from a discussion with your own provider as to which is best for you.

**I had COVID recently, when can I get a booster?** You are eligible to get a booster after resolution of your illness. There are a few employees who need to delay longer due to having received monoclonal antibody treatments. Consult your own physician if that is your situation.

**What is "Up to Date" on vaccination?** One week after receiving your booster.

**What if I had a booster with Johnson & Johnson?** Further data has revealed that J&J provides sub-optimal antibody response, so another booster with an mRNA vaccine provides you with the best coverage.

**Who and How:**

**Who is eligible?** The CDC, the California Department of Public Health, and the SF Department of Public Health all broadly recommend that anyone over 16 years old get a booster. Boosters should be obtained five months after receiving and completing the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine series. Boosters are recommended two months after receiving the Johnson and Johnson single shot vaccine.

**Am I required to get a booster?** Yes, some employees are required to get a booster because of the type of work that they do. The recently updated State requirements and updated Safer Return Together SF Health Order require boosters for those working in healthcare and High-Risk Settings (including, jails, congregate settings, SNF etc.) by February 1, 2022.

**What if my vaccination series was more recent?** Once you are vaccine eligible, employees who are required must receive their vaccine within 15 days of becoming eligible.

**When can I get vaccinated or receive a booster dose after a COVID-19 infection?**

Clinical data does not yet provide a definitive answer. The [CDC recommends](#) that post-infection COVID-19 vaccination wait until recovery from the acute illness (if symptoms were present) and criteria to discontinue isolation have been met.

Based on this guidance, the San Francisco Department of Public Health recommends that people get vaccinated or receive a booster dose as soon as possible after recovery from infection and discontinuation of isolation unless a healthcare provider has a strong reason for the booster to be delayed.

**How do I find the booster?** Go to [www.myturn.ca.gov](http://www.myturn.ca.gov) to find a location near you. Furthermore, many pharmacies have both drop in and appointments for boosters and you can book appointments on-line. Your own healthcare system may also offer boosters.

**Will the booster be included in my vaccine record?** Yes. All COVID vaccine doses are centrally recorded by the State and are included in your vaccine record. If you downloaded a vaccine record at [www.myvaccinerecord.ca.gov](http://www.myvaccinerecord.ca.gov) will have this information. Your health care provider also can access this information, but your employer cannot.

**How do I share my booster status with my department?** You may upload your booster information to People and Pay by going to the Employee Gateway <https://sfgov.org/sfc/employee-gateway> and accessing the Employee Portal using your DSW Number. Look for the Employee page and click "Update/View Vaccine Status".

**Leave:**

**Can I do this on worktime?** No. Employees can use accrued sick leave to attend booster appointments or to visit drop-in sites. Employees receiving boosters at City sponsored clinics can use work time.

**If I feel sick after my booster, can I use sick leave?** Yes. If you have a side effect from your booster that makes you unable to work, you may use accrued sick leave.