Q: I am a 55-year-old without any medical conditions, and I received my booster more than four months ago. Do I need the second COVID-19 booster now?
A: We do not think that there is harm in getting an additional booster, but we are not convinced that in the absence of other serious medical conditions, that a booster offers significant benefit if you are under 60.

Q: I am a 65-year-old without any medical conditions, and I received my first booster more than four months ago. Do I need the COVID-19 booster now?
A: The scientific committee recommends that for those older than 60, even in the absence of other serious medical conditions, a booster is a good idea as it offers protection from serious complications from COVID-19.

Q: What if I am younger than 60 but have several medical conditions and it has been more than four months since my first booster?
A: We think that individuals over the age of 50 who have other medical conditions will benefit from a fourth shot.

Q: What if I am immunocompromised?
A: We think that immunocompromised people who are 12 or older would benefit from an additional Pfizer vaccine; or if 18 years or older, either a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine.

Q: Should I wait for an omicron specific booster if I am 50?
A: Don’t wait – there are too many unknowns to base plans and actions on potential omicron specific boosters. It’s not yet clear whether omicron specific boosters are advantageous - and by the time such a booster is available omicron may have been superseded by another variant.

Q: Do I need a second booster if I was infected with the omicron variant of COVID-19?
A: If you had the first booster and a confirmed omicron infection with a PCR test, we do not think you need a second booster at this time.

Q: Who can get a COVID-19 vaccine booster?
A: Everyone 12 years and older can get the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine booster. In addition, moderately or severely immunocompromised children age 5-11 can receive an additional primary dose of the Pfizer vaccine 28 days after their second shot.

Q: When should I get my COVID-19 vaccine booster?
A: If you received the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, you should get your booster at least five months after completing your primary COVID-19 vaccination series. If you received the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, you should get your booster at least six months after completing your primary COVID-19 vaccination and if you received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, you should get your booster two months after completing your primary COVID-19 vaccination. The CDC prefers people get an mRNA booster, as studies showed those vaccines provide more protection against COVID-19 and more cases of blood clots were reported in people who got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.
Q: Is the booster the same dose as the COVID-19 vaccines?
A: The Moderna booster is a 50-microgram dose, half the normal dose of the primary vaccine. The Pfizer booster is the same dosage as the vaccine.

Q: Can I mix and match my boosters?
A: Yes. The FDA and CDC say while it’s preferable to use a booster made by the same drugmaker that produced a person’s original vaccine, providers can use their discretion to offer boosters made by a different drugmaker. A recent study from the National Institutes of Health shows that mixing and matching COVID-19 boosters increased immune responses without raising any safety concerns.

Q: Is there any evidence that boosters work to prevent COVID-19 including omicron?
A: Although COVID-19 vaccines remain effective in preventing severe disease, data from the CDC suggest their effectiveness at preventing infection or severe illness wanes over time, especially in people ages 65 years and older. The recent emergence of the omicron variant further emphasizes the importance of vaccination, boosters and prevention efforts needed to protect against severe COVID-19. Boosters give an estimated 70% to 75% protection against mild disease from the new omicron variant, the UK Health Security Agency reported, citing initial findings from a real-world study. Our scientific committee is recommending boosters for everyone six months after their second shot, and here’s some science from Israel if you are interested in learning more.

Q: Are the boosters free?
A: Yes.

Q: What are the risks to getting a booster?
A: Reactions reported after getting the Pfizer and Moderna boosters were similar to that of the second shot in the two-shot primary series. Fatigue and pain at the injection site were the most commonly reported side effects, and overall, most side effects were mild to moderate.

Q: What if I can't remember when I received my last COVID-19 vaccine shot?
A: You should check your CDC vaccination record card for the date of your second COVID-19 vaccination. If you do not have your vaccination card, contact your primary care provider or the retail pharmacy where you were first vaccinated. If you received your initial vaccine at a Houston Methodist vaccine clinic, your information should be in your MyChart account.

Q: Should I delay my flu shot until after I receive my Pfizer booster shot?
A: No. There is no need to delay a COVID-19 booster or your flu shot, as it is safe to get those at the same time. Here’s guidance from the CDC on that a story on the Houston Methodist blog, On Health.

Q: Can someone treated with monoclonal antibodies get a COVID-19 vaccine booster?
A: If you were treated with monoclonal antibody therapy, you should wait at least 90 days before getting a COVID-19 booster shot.

*This FAQ will be updated periodically to include evolving data and opinions from the Vaccine Scientific Committee 04042022