Q: Who can get a COVID-19 vaccine booster?
A: Everyone 16 years and older can get the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine booster.

Q: When should I get my COVID-19 vaccine booster?
A: If you received the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, you should get your booster at least six months after completing your primary COVID-19 vaccination series. If you received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, you should get your booster at least 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: Why do I need a booster?
A: The current vaccines are still effective against the variants we are now seeing, particularly for protecting against serious illness that would require hospitalization or cause death. But according to the CDC, studies show that vaccine protection against the virus may decrease over time and be less able to protect against the Delta and Omicron variants.

Data from Israel show that the boosters are also effective in keeping health care workers from getting sick, not just severe illness. And with the national staffing shortage, it is vital we do what we can to not get COVID-19 so we can continue caring for our community.

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: When can children get a vaccine?
A: Yes. The FDA and CDC authorized an EUA for the use of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine in children ages 5 to 11.

Q: Is the booster mandatory for employees?
A: Not at this time. But they are highly encouraged as we must stay healthy to continue caring for our patients.

Q: How can I get a booster?
A: Houston Methodist employees and physicians can schedule a Pfizer booster through the Employee Health portal, just like with the annual flu shot. And just like with the flu shot, employees will be asked to sign a consent form in the portal prior to the appointment. Moderna boosters are available at PCG provider offices and same day clinics for patients who are seen at those locations.

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.

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