

# Why Long Term Care Residents Should Get the COVID-19 Bivalent Booster



## What is a bivalent booster?

The COVID-19 bivalent booster is an updated vaccine that helps target the new variants of COVID-19, like Omicron, and boosts your immune system to better fight symptoms from COVID-19.

## Why should I get a bivalent booster shot if I already got a booster?

The COVID-19 virus keeps changing slightly and over time, a person's immune system can lose its memory of prior infections. This is one of the reasons why the influenza vaccine is modified annually. The bivalent booster is tailored to two of the most recent Omicron variants and boosts your immune system so if you get infected it can fight the COVID-19 virus more efficiently.

Based on a recent study, the bivalent boosters are 84% more effective at keeping seniors 65 and older from being hospitalized due to COVID-19 compared with the unvaccinated. **Seniors who receive the bivalent booster reduced their risk of being hospitalized by 73% compared with those who had two or more doses of the original vaccine.**

## Why should I get boosted if I might get COVID-19 anyway?

Even if you test positive for COVID, the bivalent booster works to lower your risk of developing symptoms and especially lowers your risk of developing severe symptoms or being sent to the hospital. People who get the bivalent booster can still get infected with the virus, but they are much less likely to get seriously ill, need to be hospitalized, or die.

In a large scientific study of 360,626 people who tested positive for COVID-19, those who got the bivalent booster compared with people who were vaccinated with an original booster had stronger protection against developing symptoms:

- Adults 18-49 are 56% less likely to experience symptoms
- Adults 50-64 are 48% less likely to experience symptoms
- **Adults 65+ are 43% less likely to experience symptoms**

In another study, those who got the bivalent booster saw an increase in the function of their immune system (their antibodies increased by 2.1 times) against the most recent Omicron COVID-19 strain compared to early COVID-19 strains.

*Note: This document is for informational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. Based on data and scientific reports available as of December 16, 2022.*

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## Who should get a bivalent booster shot?

Residents of nursing homes or assisted living communities should get a bivalent booster because they are more likely to be hospitalized or have complications if they become infected with COVID-19. You are eligible for your bivalent booster shot if:

- It's been at least two months since your last COVID-19 vaccination
- You have not already received the bivalent vaccine (you do not need a second bivalent booster), and
- You are not currently infected with COVID-19

## Why do I need to get a booster shot if I have already had COVID-19?

If you have had COVID within the past three months, you have some protection against the virus and may delay getting the bivalent booster. However, this protection decreases over time, especially against getting serious illness, hospitalization or death. So, **if it's been three months or more since your last infection, you should get a bivalent booster.**

In one scientific study, people who had been infected in the past and got the bivalent booster had more antibodies that can fight the new strains of COVID-19 virus compared to those who did not have a prior infection with COVID-19.

## Is the bivalent booster safe?

In a study of over 22.6 million people who received the bivalent booster since it was released in the fall of 2022, **the bivalent booster was found to be very safe.** The amount of people who had reactions such as pain, fever, and aches were similar to the original COVID-19 vaccine. These reactions are typically manageable with pain relievers, such as Tylenol or Advil, and last for 24-48 hours.

## How can I get my booster shot?

Ask your physician or nurse caring for you in your long term care facility if you should get the bivalent booster vaccine. Ask them about getting your flu shot as well!

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