

Congressional Coronavirus Disease Update; Coronavirus Booster Vaccinations for Previously Vaccinated Individuals



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The Attending Physician

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SUBJ: Congressional Coronavirus Disease Update; Coronavirus Booster Vaccinations for Previously Vaccinated Individuals

Since my last E-Colleague letter to you on July 27, 2021, coronavirus cases have continued their dramatic increase in the United States, with more than 200,000 new cases per day along with increased rates of hospitalization and deaths. The Delta variant of the SARS CoV2 coronavirus now accounts for 99% of all new coronavirus cases in the United States, and 100% of sequenced samples at the Capitol. It continues to challenge aspects of disease control, public health, and informs the urgency to complete vaccination for unvaccinated individuals. The Delta variant virus represents a dire health risk to unvaccinated individuals and is not without some risk to the vaccinated individuals or their unvaccinated household contacts, including children under the age of 12. It is now endangering many regions of the United States where vaccination rates are low. In many locations critical care resources are strained to their limit with no sign of relief for this grim situation.

Fortunately, coronavirus vaccines remain highly effective, extremely safe, and continue to offer excellent protection from serious consequences of coronavirus infection. National efforts to promote primary coronavirus vaccination among unvaccinated individuals remains a critical priority, particularly in light of the Delta variant. Vaccination remains available at the Capitol, without appointment needed, at any time during Rayburn Health Unit operating hours for anyone with a congressional identification card. Additionally, the FDA has made new recommendations for previously vaccinated individuals to receive booster vaccine doses to sustain the viral protection offered by these vaccines. This letter provides more information about these new recommendations. It also provides reminders about unchanged recommendations, including mask wear and daily health self-assessments, and on-campus COVID testing.

Booster Vaccinations for the Immunosuppressed Individual (Available Now)

On August 12, 2021, the Food and Drug Administration modified the Emergency Use Authorization for the Pfizer and Moderna coronavirus vaccines to permit a third dose of vaccine for those previously vaccinated individuals who may be at risk for diminished protection against coronavirus infection.

Suppression of their immune system because of disease or certain medication use may lead to a poor protective vaccine response. The Office of Attending Physician is prepared to provide this vaccination to the FDA indicated recipients immediately. The FDA criteria for a booster vaccine dose are:

- Individuals who are organ transplant recipients such as heart, lung, kidney, liver, or bone marrow
- Individuals that have a chronic leukemia or malignancy of blood that impairs the immune system
- Individuals who take medications that suppress the immune system for management of medical conditions

-Individuals currently receiving chemotherapy for cancer within the past 24 months

-Individuals who have chronic medical conditions, such as kidney failure, that have immune suppression consequences

Individuals who come to the Rayburn Health Unit (G 2050) and indicate they meet one of these criteria will receive the Pfizer vaccine booster dose. I do not require their medical records or doctor's prescriptions. Individuals should bring their coronavirus vaccination card with them so that their existing vaccine cards can be annotated with the new information. For this immunocompromised vaccine booster, the OAP will provide the Pfizer vaccine product. (The FDA has specified that individuals who received the Moderna vaccine previously should receive the Moderna vaccine but may receive the Pfizer vaccine if Moderna is unavailable).

For individuals who received the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine, the FDA and CDC do not recommend a booster vaccine for any individual who has received this vaccination product so far. There is a special clinical trial now underway by the J&J manufacturer to determine if the J&J vaccine recipient would benefit by a booster vaccine and the best timing of administration. Recommendations for the J&J treated individuals are pending FDA review of this trial.

Booster Vaccinations for all other individuals at least 8 Months after Completing Coronavirus Vaccination (projected availability: September 20, 2021).

On August 18, 2021, President Biden stated that the Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control would complete additional data review and authorization to permit a third dose of Pfizer or Moderna coronavirus vaccines to be administered to individuals who completed a previous two-dose vaccine series more than 8 months ago. This program is estimated to begin on September 20, 2021. The OAP is prepared to provide this booster vaccination when the FDA review and authorization is complete. I will provide further details of the vaccination process when available. Expansion of the booster eligibility for those vaccinated more than 8 months ago was recommended by the Department Health and Human Services and medical experts based on their analysis of CDC USA vaccine recipients' data and international vaccination data followed closely over time. In these groups of Pfizer vaccine recipients, under pressure from Delta variant coronavirus, there was decreased protection from infection the further individuals were from their vaccination date beginning 6 months after their vaccination was completed (8 months was considered as a time of further increased risk). These analyses raised the possibility that with the passage of additional time from vaccination, the potential for serious consequences of infection may increase. The booster vaccination for all recipients, greater than 8 months from the completion of their vaccination, was recommended to sustain the protection against serious infection consequences. [CDC Overview of Data to Recommend Coronavirus Booster Vaccination](#) [HHS and Medical Experts Joint Statement on Coronavirus Booster Vaccinations](#)

There is limited information about the risks of receiving an additional dose of coronavirus vaccine. The safety, efficacy, and benefit of additional doses of COVID-19 vaccine in immunocompromised people continues to be evaluated. So far, reactions reported after the third vaccine dose were similar to that of the two-dose series: temporary fatigue and pain at injection site were the most commonly reported side effects, and overall, most symptoms were mild to moderate. [CDC clinical considerations on COVID 19 vaccines.](#)

Masks and testing.

I urge all individuals to also continue important measures to reduce the spread of coronavirus as previously discussed in my July 27, 2021, Dear E-Colleague and other previous guidance. This includes wearing a properly-fitted, medical-grade, filtration face mask (surgical mask, KN95 mask) when in crowded outdoor events or when in indoor spaces and another person is present; practicing hand washing; avoiding the workplace if they are ill; and continuing to participate in their daily health self-assessment check prior to coming to work. Completion of the health self-assessment before reporting to the workplace and also reporting the results in a screening attestation that is sent to their office's designated work center monitor before arriving in the workplace is necessary even after the individual is fully vaccinated.

The CVC Coronavirus Test Center remains available and open in HVC 200 each day for walk-in, same-day-result rt-PCR based coronavirus testing for any concerned individuals (see posted hours for HVC 200 operating hours on my website at [HVC 200 Test Center Hours](#)).

CONTACT US

For medical concerns (COVID or non-COVID related) contact the OAP at the numbers below. A physician is available to discuss your concern and provide guidance for further evaluation as needed.

- 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM weekdays: Call the OAP Main Office at 202-225-5421.
- All other times: Contact the Capitol Operator at 202-224-2145 and ask for the On-Call Physician.
Further information is available at: <https://attendingphysician.house.gov/>

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