

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 Aug 20, 2021, coronavirus cases have remained elevated in many regions of the USA, while declining in others. Presently there are more than 140,000 new cases per day in the USA along with increased rates of hospitalization and deaths. The vast majority of deaths (greater than 2000 deaths per day) are among unvaccinated individuals. Disease activity in the District of Columbia metropolitan area has continued to increase. The Delta variant of the SARS CoV2 coronavirus now accounts for almost all new coronavirus cases in the United States. It continues to challenge aspects of disease control, public health, and informs the ongoing 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. Several states have activated reserve medical resources and other federal assets to keep their critical care capability afloat, while other states have begun to ration medical care.

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 by appointment (see link and QR code below to schedule appointment), at the Rayburn Health Unit for anyone with a congressional identification card. Additionally, the FDA has made new recommendations for previously vaccinated individuals to receive a third vaccine dose ("booster") to sustain the viral protection offered by these vaccines. This letter provides more information about these new recommendations published by the FDA on Sept 22, 2021 [FDA EUA for Pfizer Coronavirus Booster Vaccinations in Certain Populations](#).

Booster Vaccinations for the Immunosuppressed Individual (available since Aug 12, 2021)

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 continues to provide this vaccination to the FDA indicated recipients. The FDA criteria for a booster vaccine dose for immunosuppressed individuals 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 make a vaccine appointment at 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 clinical trial recently concluded by the J&J that determined J&J vaccine recipients would benefit by a booster vaccine dose. Recommendations for the J&J treated individuals are pending FDA review of this trial.

Pfizer Booster Vaccinations for all other individuals at least 6 Months after Completing Coronavirus Vaccination (FDA Emergency Use Authorization Sept 22, 2021))

The additional booster dose of Pfizer vaccine for previous Pfizer recipients was authorized by the FDA on September 22, 2021. Addition review by the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted a more restrictive eligibility on Sept 23, 2021. The criteria advanced by the CDC ACIP is subject to ongoing analysis and revision.

The OAP is prepared to provide the Pfizer coronavirus booster vaccination for:

- Individuals 65 years of age and older who previously received the Pfizer vaccine.
- Individuals 50 through 64 years of age who previously received the Pfizer vaccine with underlying medical conditions raising COVID 19 infection consequences.
- Individuals between 18 and 49 years of age who previously received the Pfizer vaccine that may benefit from the booster vaccination determined by an individual assessment of their risk and benefit of vaccination based on their underlying medical condition
- **Individuals between 18 and 64 years who previously received the Pfizer vaccine and whose frequent institutional or occupational exposure to the virus puts them at high risk of serious complications from the disease caused by the virus.**
 - (This authorization applies only to the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine)

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.](#)

Details of this Coronavirus Booster vaccination Program:

Who: Anyone with a valid Congressional identification is eligible for the first two doses for unvaccinated individuals.

Third dose (boosters) are available to previously vaccinated individuals as follows:

- Age 65 and over and who previously received the Pfizer vaccine, OR

- Individuals 50 through 64 years of age who previously received the Pfizer vaccine and with underlying medical conditions raising COVID 19 infection consequences, OR
- Individuals between 18 and 49 years of age who previously received the Pfizer vaccine and that may benefit from the booster vaccination determined by an individual assessment of their risk and benefit of vaccination based on their underlying medical condition, OR
- **Individuals between 18 and 64 years who previously received the Pfizer vaccine and whose frequent institutional or occupational exposure to the virus puts them at high risk of serious complications from the disease caused by the virus, OR**
- Anyone 16 and older who previously received the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine AND diagnosed with a moderately to severely immunocompromised state per CDC criteria.

(Recipients of the Moderna vaccine are only eligible for a booster if they meet immunocompromised criteria. Recipients of the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine are NOT eligible for a booster dose at this time.)

Where: COVID vaccinations are ONLY in the Rayburn Health Unit (RHOB G-2050).

When: - Anyone may schedule an appointment to receive the first vaccination at any time.

- Second vaccinations may be scheduled at least 21 days after the first dose.

- Individuals meeting CDC immunocompromised criteria may schedule an appointment for a third vaccination at least 28 days after their second vaccination.

- Individuals meeting Third Dose booster program criteria may schedule an appointment for a third vaccination at least 6 months after their previous completed vaccination.

-The 2021 Season Influenza Vaccine may be given at any time related to the coronavirus vaccinations. (Further details about influenza vaccination will be published in a separate announcement.)

How: - Vaccinations are by appointment ONLY. Appointment scheduling is available through the COVID Vaccine Appointment Scheduling portal.

- You may access the portal through this [link](#).

- Alternatively, you may access the site via the following QR code posted outside Health Units throughout the campus:

Vaccine Cards:

- You **MUST** bring your COVID vaccine card to all appointments following your initial shot. As always, keep it in a safe place and consider taking a photo to keep in your phone.

- You may be directed to re-schedule your appointment if you do not have the card available at the time of your visit.

- If you need a replacement card to participate in the booster program or a consolidation of cards documenting shots administered through the OAP, you may visit the Hart Health Unit (HSOB SH-142) on Fridays from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM for assistance. Service will be available on a walk-in basis at that time.

Note: - High demand is expected. If you cannot or no longer need to attend a scheduled appointment, please return to the scheduling website to cancel and/or re-schedule.

Contact: For any other vaccine-related questions, you may call 202-225-8299 (5-VAXX) from 8:30 AM to 5:00PM weekdays. During times of high call volume your call will be answered in the order it was received.

ON THE DAY OF YOUR APPOINTMENT

1. Wear loose fitting attire such that your upper arm may easily be exposed.
2. Bring your valid Congressional identification.
3. Bring your COVID Vaccination Record Card (not required for a first shot visit).
4. Bring an electronic or printed copy of your appointment confirmation email.
5. Arrive 5-10 minutes before your scheduled appointment time.
6. Expect a required observation period of 15 to 30 minutes following the shot.

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, etc) 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.

Mask wear (a properly fitted, medical grade, filtration mask) is a critical necessity unless the individual is alone in a closed office space, or while eating or drinking in a food service area.

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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