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## COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #62

### Bivalent Vaccine Now Available for Boosters for 5-to-11-Year-Olds, Updated Guidance on Booster Doses and Coadministration for Children Under 5 Years

**Attention:** Physicians, Emergency Departments, Hospital CEOs, Hospital Laboratories, Infection Control Practitioners, Occupational Health Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Nurse and Nurse Practitioners, EMS, Designated Officers, Midwives, Family Health Teams, Pharmacies, Central LHIN, NSM LHIN, Beausoleil First Nation, Moose Deer Point First Nation, Rama First Nation, Wahta First Nation, Long-term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, Hospices, Coroners, Funeral Directors, Dentists, Group Homes, Homes for Special Care, Optometrists, Corrections, Municipalities, Licensed Child Care Providers

**Date:** December 21, 2022

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#### **Pfizer-BioNTech Bivalent Vaccine Now Available for Boosters for 5-to-11-Year-Olds**

On December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Health Canada authorized a pediatric formulation of Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty BA.4/5 Bivalent COVID-19 vaccine for a booster dose for children 5 to 11 years of age.

Children 5 to 11 years of age **are eligible** to receive a booster dose six months after completion of their primary series of COVID-19 vaccine or last SARS-CoV-2 infection. It is recommended that bivalent vaccine be used for booster doses to provide broader protection against Omicron subvariants. Children who have already received a monovalent booster dose on or after September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, are not recommended to receive an additional bivalent booster dose.

Those with underlying medical conditions<sup>1</sup> that place them at high-risk of severe illness due to COVID-19 (including those who are moderately or severely immunocompromised and received a three dose primary series) are **strongly recommended** to receive a booster dose.

The dose is 10 mcg/0.2mL (5 mcg of ancestral strain and 5 mcg of Omicron BA.4/5). Unfortunately, the **same orange cap and similar colored label have been used by the manufacturer for the bivalent product**. Be sure to store monovalent and bivalent products separately to avoid administration errors.

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<sup>1</sup> Individuals with an underlying medical condition may include those with cardiac or pulmonary disorders, diabetes or other metabolic diseases, cancer, renal disease, anemia or hemoglobinopathy, neurologic or neurodevelopmental conditions or obesity.



Booster dose(s) are recommended for all eligible populations based on the ongoing risk of infection due to waning immunity, the ongoing risk of severe illness from COVID-19, the societal disruption that results from transmission of infections, and the adverse impacts on health system capacity from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The optimal interval after a previous COVID-19 vaccination or confirmed SARSCoV-2 infection is six months. A shortened interval of at least three months may be considered in the context of heightened epidemiologic risk and for those at high-risk of severe COVID-19 outcomes.

### Summary of Current Booster Recommendations by Age:

- Infants and children 6 months to 4 years are **not eligible** for a booster dose at this time.
- Individuals 5 to 11 years of age **are eligible** to receive a booster dose six months after completion of their primary series of COVID-19 vaccine or last SARS-CoV-2 infection.
  - Individuals with an underlying medical condition<sup>1</sup> that places them at high-risk of severe illness due to COVID-19 (including those who are immunocompromised and who have received a 3-dose primary series) are **strongly recommended** to receive a booster dose.
- Individuals 12 years and older **are eligible** to receive a booster dose at the recommended interval of six months from their last dose of COVID-19 vaccine or previous SARS-CoV-2 infection.
  - In accordance with [National Advisory Committee on Immunization \(NACI\)](#), **the following high-risk groups are strongly recommended** to receive a booster dose this 2022/2023 respiratory season:
    - Individuals aged 65 years and older.
    - Residents of long-term care homes, retirement homes, Elder Care Lodges, and individuals living in other congregate setting that are 12 years of age or older.
    - Individuals 12 years and older with moderately to severely immunocompromising conditions.
    - Individuals 12 years of age and older with an underlying medical condition<sup>1</sup> that places them at high-risk of severe COVID-19.
    - Health care workers<sup>2</sup>.
    - Pregnant individuals.
    - Adults who identify as First Nations, Inuit or Métis and their adult non-Indigenous household members.
    - Adults in racialized and/or marginalized communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

For booster doses, bivalent vaccine is recommended over monovalent. Bivalent COVID-19 vaccines target the original COVID-19 virus and Omicron subvariant(s). Bivalent Moderna targets the BA.1 Omicron subvariant, while the bivalent Pfizer-BioNTech target the BA.4/5 subvariants. Currently there is no evidence to suggest any meaningful difference in protection between BA.1 and BA.4/5 bivalent vaccines.

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<sup>2</sup> Health care workers are not a higher risk of severe outcomes, unless they belong to another high-risk group. However, patient-facing health care workers who care for high-risk patients are recommended to be vaccinated to protect their vulnerable patients and all health care workers are recommended to be vaccinated to ensure health system capacity.

As per [NACI's Updated guidance on COVID-19 vaccine booster doses in Canada](#):

- NACI **strongly recommends** that all individuals  $\geq 65$  years of age and individuals  $\geq 12$  years of age who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 should be offered **a fall** COVID-19 vaccine booster dose regardless of the number of booster doses previously received.
- NACI **recommends** that all other individuals 12 to 64 years of age **may be offered a fall** COVID-19 vaccine booster dose regardless of the number of booster doses previously received.

As per NACI, individuals who have received an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine as part of a fall COVID-19 vaccine booster program do not require an additional dose of a COVID-19 vaccine at this time. This includes individuals who were vaccinated using any authorized original or bivalent mRNA COVID-19 vaccine. Both original and bivalent mRNA COVID-19 vaccines will boost immune responses and are likely to provide significant protection against hospitalization and severe disease. **Therefore, there is currently no recommendation for individuals to receive an additional booster this 2022/2023 respiratory season if they have already received a monovalent or bivalent COVID-19 vaccine booster on or after September 1, 2022.**

However, if someone wants to receive an additional booster dose, they can do so at the recommended six month interval (minimum interval of three months) from their last dose with informed consent.

Novavax vaccine has been approved by Health Canada as a booster dose for those who cannot or will not receive mRNA vaccines. The same interval and booster recommendations apply for Novavax vaccine. Anyone wanting to receive Novavax vaccine can visit [the health unit website](#) to submit their information and someone from the health unit will call them to book an appointment at one of our Novavax clinics.

### **Coadministration for Children Under 5 Years**

NACI has updated their recommendations to support coadministration of COVID-19 vaccines with other vaccines in children under 5 years of age. Children 6 months and older may receive a COVID-19 vaccine simultaneously (i.e. same day) with or at any time before or after non-COVID vaccines. Informed consent should include a discussion that there is limited data available on administration of COVID-19 vaccines at the same time as other vaccines, and that studies are ongoing.

### **For more information:**

For more detailed information about eligibility and guidance, please refer to the [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Vaccine Guidance](#) document.

For more information about the rollout of COVID-19 vaccine in our area, please refer to the SMDHU [COVID-19 Vaccine and Immunization](#) webpages.

There are a number of COVID-19 resources and documents available through our Health Professional Portal at [www.smdhu.org/hpportal](http://www.smdhu.org/hpportal) as well as through [Public Health Ontario](#) and the [Government of Ontario](#).

To help you determine the best ways to protect yourself and others from COVID-19 infection and serious illness, refer to the SMDHU [COVID-19 Community Risk Tool](#).