

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Current ATAGI Recommendations for COVID-19 Booster Doses

**My patient has had a second booster (fourth dose) and is now requesting an additional booster dose. Can they receive an additional booster (fifth dose)?**

- ATAGI does not recommend a third booster of any COVID-19 vaccine at present.
- Vaccination should always be in-line with current ATAGI guidelines.
- ATAGI continues to monitor evidence on vaccine effectiveness, the epidemiology of SARS-CoV-2 (including its seasonality and emerging subvariants) and will provide additional booster dose recommendations as needed.

**Are the new bivalent vaccines more effective than the original mRNA formulations because they contain Omicron subvariants?**

- The COVID-19 bivalent vaccines contain the mRNA sequences for two different SARS-CoV-2 variants: the ancestral strain (as used in the original COVID-19 vaccine formulations) and the Omicron BA.1 subvariant.
- Modelling data suggests that differences in the additional protection against COVID-19 from a bivalent booster over an original formulation booster are relatively small compared to the protection obtained from receiving any booster at all.
- Booster vaccination with a variant-containing vaccine is anticipated to induce a broad and more durable immune response to SARS-CoV-2, including future variants, and may not necessarily 'match' the most recent circulating variant.
- ATAGI considers receiving all recommended doses to be a more important factor in obtaining optimal protection against severe COVID-19 than which variant is contained within the dose.
- ATAGI recommends that any person who has not yet received a first or recommended second COVID-19 booster dose, arrange to receive their booster soon, using either a bivalent booster or an alternative original vaccine formulation.

**How many booster doses of COVID-19 vaccine does my patient need?**

- **Adolescents aged 12 to 15 years in the following groups who completed their primary course 3 or more months ago may receive a single COVID-19 vaccine booster:**
  - those who are severely immunocompromised
  - those who have a disability with significant or complex health needs
  - those who have complex and/or multiple health conditions that increase the risk of severe COVID-19.
- For more information on boosters in adolescents aged 12 to 15 years see: [ATAGI recommendations on first booster dose in adolescents aged 12-15 years](#).

- **Individuals aged 16 years and older who have completed their primary course 3 or more months ago may receive a single COVID-19 vaccine booster (third dose).**
- **A second booster (fourth dose) is recommended for people in the following groups, 3 months after the first booster (third dose):**
  - people aged 50 years and older
  - residents aged 16 years and older of an aged care or disability care facility
  - people aged 16 years and older who have complex, chronic, or severe medical conditions that increase their risk of severe illness from COVID-19
  - people aged 16 years and older with disability with significant or complex health needs, or multiple comorbidities that increase the risk of poor outcome from COVID-19.
- ATAGI has advised people aged 30 to 49 years old can receive a second booster (fourth dose) if they choose.
  - The benefit for people in this age group is less certain and ATAGI encourages people in this age group to have a discussion with their regular medical provider to review their individual health needs and the benefits and risks of a second booster dose.
- **ATAGI does not recommend third booster (fifth dose) of any COVID-19 vaccine at present.**
- For more information on booster doses, visit <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/getting-your-vaccination/booster-doses#booster-doses>

### **When will there be updates to the booster dose recommendations?**

- ATAGI continues to actively review the role of booster doses in the COVID-19 vaccination program.
- New booster dose recommendations are anticipated in early 2023 in preparation for winter.
- Future recommendations will aim to provide ongoing clear guidance across all groups including time since last dose and definitions of eligibility.