

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.