



COVID Vaccine FAQs for Transplant Patients

What is the difference between a booster dose and an additional dose?

- An **additional dose** is given when the initial immune response following a primary vaccine series is likely to be insufficient. This usually pertains to people with compromised immune systems.
- A **booster dose** is given when the initial sufficient immune response is likely to wane over time. This usually pertains to persons with healthy immune systems. There are no recommendations for booster doses at this time.

Can I get an additional dose? The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has recommended an additional dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine for some people with weak immune systems. Patients with solid-organ transplants who are taking immunosuppressive therapy qualify for this additional dose.

We recommend you get an additional vaccine dose as potential benefits outweigh any risk. The vaccines are considered safe and may provide additional protection against COVID-19 in persons with compromised systems that may not have gotten a sufficient response to the vaccine.

- You should get the same dose type (Moderna or Pfizer) if possible. If not, it is ok to get the other dose type.
 - The Moderna vaccine is for people who are 18 years old or greater.
 - The Pfizer vaccine is for people who are 12 years old or greater.
- **You must have completed the series of shots more than 28 days ago to be eligible for the additional dose.** It does not matter if you had the series last year, you can still get the additional dose now.
- You do not need a doctor/provider note or prescription to receive this dose. You will just need to attest or confirm that you are immunocompromised.

What if I haven't had a transplant yet? Anyone age 18 or older is now eligible for a booster dose. We recommend you get a booster dose as potential benefits outweigh any risk.

- You should get the same dose type (Moderna, Pfizer, or Johnson & Johnson) if possible. If not, it is ok to get another dose type.
- Moderna or Pfizer vaccine
 - **You must have completed the series of 2 shots more than 6 months ago to be eligible for the booster dose.** It does not matter if you had the series last year, you can still get the booster dose if it has been at least 6 months.
- Johnson & Johnson vaccine
 - **You must have completed the vaccine more than 2 months ago to be eligible for the booster dose.** It does not matter if you had the vaccine last year, you can still get the booster dose if it has been at least 2 months.

Where can I get an additional vaccine dose or booster dose?

- The additional vaccine dose and booster dose are both approved in Oregon.
- Check with your neighborhood pharmacy. It may take a little time to get an appointment but there are plenty of vaccines for those who need them. You do not need a prescription or note from a provider.
- OHSU Health pharmacies are offering the additional vaccine dose and booster dose. This does require an appointment. For more information about locations and hours, go to www.ohsu.edu/covidvaccines.

When can I get a fourth dose of the vaccine? This is not something we are recommending at this time. We will continue to follow

Can my caregiver, household members, family, etc. get the additional vaccine dose or booster dose? If your caregiver, household members, family, etc. are 18 years or older they can now receive the booster dose. They will qualify when it has been at least 6 months since their Moderna or Pfizer vaccine OR when it has been at least 2 months since their Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

What about my children? The Pfizer vaccine is now approved for those between the ages of 5 and 11. You can make an appointment at the drive-through vaccine site at the Portland Expo Center either online or by calling 833-647-8222 weekdays 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

https://www.ohsu.edu/health/covid-19-vaccines-information-and-appointments?utm_source=42536&utm_medium=email&content=COVID+vaccine+vanity+URL%3a+new+option+for+kids+5-11

What symptoms will I have with the additional vaccine dose or booster dose? Your symptoms should be the same as symptoms with previous doses, but only at a mild to moderate level. The data we have so far from small studies has shown no critical side effects requiring hospitalization. The additional dose has not led to any serious adverse events or acute rejection episodes.

I have had COVID. When can I get the vaccine or my additional vaccine dose? You should wait until your symptoms have gone away and you are out of isolation.

How long does home isolation last?

- You have not had a transplant and do not have a compromised immune system: You can stop home isolation when it has been 10 days since you first had symptoms OR 10 days since your test result if you never had symptoms. You also need to have gone 24 hours with NO fever without using fever-reducing medicines.
- You have had a transplant or have a compromised immune system: You can stop home isolation when it has been 20 days since you first had symptoms OR 20 days since your test result if you never had symptoms. You also need to have gone 24 hours with NO fever without using fever-reducing medicines.

I was treated for COVID-19 with a monoclonal antibody. When can I get the vaccine or my additional vaccine dose? You should wait 90 days.

What if I have questions about getting the COVID-19 additional vaccine dose? Please call the Transplant Office 503-494-8500 during office hours, send your Transplant Provider a My Chart message, or contact your local doctor. **DO NOT PAGE RN AFTER HOURS OR ON WEEKENDS REGARDING VACCINE QUESTIONS.**

Do I still need to wear a mask? We recommend that all patients continue protective measures including masking and social distancing regardless of vaccination status. **The additional vaccine dose does not guarantee anyone immunity.** These protective behaviors should continue especially given the COVID-19 delta variant that can lead to break through infections even if vaccinated.

- Continue to follow your federal and state laws and regulations.
- Wear a mask that fits well with no gaps
- Stay at least 6 feet from others you don't live with
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces until advised otherwise
- Get vaccinated
- Limit visits with people who are not vaccinated or whose vaccination status is unknown
- Wash your hands often

What if I have COVID symptoms?

- Stay home and isolate - separate yourself from others.
- Notify your transplant center or managing doctor as soon as possible. You may qualify for medication (monoclonal antibody) to treat your COVID-19 infection.
 - This medication has to be given within 10 days of your first symptom.
- You should also get a COVID-19 test.
- You can call the COVID Connected Care Center; open 7 days a week from 8 am to 8 pm at 833-647-8222. Call if you have any questions about COVID symptoms, quarantine or de-isolation guidelines.
- As always, call 911 if you have chest pain, problems breathing, or a high fever.

Is the vaccine safe for transplant patients? Yes. Our transplant team experts feel that the benefit of getting a COVID-19 vaccine far outweighs any potential risk. Because of a lowered immune system, transplant patients can have worse outcomes if they do get COVID-19 infection.

Should my caregiver, household members, family, etc. get the vaccine? Yes. It is important for them to get the vaccine when it is available to protect you and to protect themselves. They should also follow the standard COVID-19 prevention guidelines.

If I have not had a transplant yet, will I be required to get the vaccine? We have always required patients to get all appropriate vaccines before transplant. This now includes the COVID-19 vaccine. The full dose of the COVID-19 vaccine is now required to be activated on the OHSU transplant waitlist. This vaccine protects you from infections after transplant, when

your immune system is weakened from antirejection medication. People with weak immune systems get more severe cases of COVID-19.

Should I lower my mycophenolate or other immunosuppression medications before vaccination? No. It is important that you stay on your immunosuppression doses to decrease the risk of rejection. Rejection can require treatment with higher doses of antirejection medications. These higher doses lower your immune system more, which would increase your risk of infection even more.

What about the information that the vaccine does not work for transplant patients? Recent studies do show that transplant patients have a lower antibody response to the vaccine when compared to the general population. This is expected, since we know transplant recipients have a lowered immune response to other vaccines. Lower antibody response may still prevent infection and it is important to see if the vaccine protects against severe COVID-19 disease. The goal is to prevent more cases of COVID-19 infection and to reduce the severity of breakthrough cases with vaccination.

Should I get antibody testing? We do not recommend antibody testing as a way to determine if you have protection from COVID-19 infection. There are a different antibody tests out there with different target levels. Results of this testing may represent reaction to the vaccine and not protection from infection. There is no well-established protective target result. The results of antibody testing will not change recommendations to follow protective measures against COVID-19.

Where can I get a COVID-19 test, not the vaccine?

- Check with your local pharmacy or drugstore such as Walgreens or Fred Meyer.
- OHSU in Portland. You can call 833-647-8222 to make an appointment.
- The Oregon Health Authority site <https://govstatus.egov.com/or-oha-covid-19-testing> or call 211 for help to find a testing site.

How do I learn more?

- The CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/immuno.html>
- The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/index.html>
- American Society of Transplantation Vaccine FAQ: <https://www.myast.org/sites/default/files/081321%20AST%20COVID%20Vaccine%20Info%20Patients%2008.13.21%20FINAL%20%281%29.pdf>
- Go to the OHSU site <https://www.ohsu.edu/health/coronavirus-resources>