COVID-19 Vaccines: Third Dose for People Who Are Immunocompromised

Some people who are moderately to severely immunocompromised (meaning they have a weakened immune system) should get three doses of the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine rather than the standard two-dose regimen.

Who is eligible for a third dose?
People who are age 12 or older, have a condition or are taking medications or treatments that moderately or severely weakens their immune system, and got either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine are eligible for a third dose.

Examples of conditions and treatments include:
- Moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency
- Advanced or untreated HIV
- Getting active treatment for cancer
- Getting active treatment with a high dose of corticosteroids or other drugs that moderately or severely weaken the immune system
- Have received an organ transplant and are taking immunosuppressive therapy
- Have received a stem cell transplant within the past two years

This is not a complete list. The third dose recommendation is for people who have conditions that weaken their immune system, but not for most people with medical conditions such as diabetes or heart or lung disease.

Why is a third dose recommended?
The recommendation is based on studies that show some people who are immunocompromised do not build the same amount of immunity after getting vaccinated as people who are not immunocompromised. A third dose may improve the immune response.

How do I know if I need a third dose?
You should discuss getting a third dose with your health care provider. They will consider your medical conditions and treatment, risk of COVID-19 infection and other factors. At this time, antibody tests are not recommended for determining whether you have immunity (protection) against COVID-19.

Is it safe to get a third dose?
Yes. The Food and Drug Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and independent experts determined that the benefits of getting a third dose outweigh any known or potential risks.

When should I get my third dose?
You should get your third dose at least 28 days after your second dose.

Does the third dose need to be of the same vaccine brand as the first two doses?
Your third dose should be of the same vaccine brand as your first two doses, if possible. If you cannot get the same vaccine brand (Pfizer or Moderna), you can get the other brand (Pfizer or Moderna).
I am immunocompromised and got a third vaccine dose. Can I get a booster shot?
People age 18 and older who are moderately to severely immunocompromised and received a third dose following their initial vaccine series can get a booster shot at least six months after their third dose. For more information, visit nyc.gov/health/covidvaccine and look for Booster Shot Recommendation for Pfizer and Moderna Vaccine Recipients.

What about people who got the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine?
People age 18 and older who are moderately to severely immunocompromised and got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine should get a booster dose at least two months after their initial Johnson & Johnson dose. For more information, visit nyc.gov/health/covidvaccine and look for Booster Shot Recommendation for Johnson & Johnson Vaccine Recipients.

Where can I get a third dose?
You can get a third dose anywhere that offers the brand of vaccine you need. You do not need to go to the same place where you got your first two doses. To find a vaccination site, visit nyc.gov/vaccinefinder and choose “Pfizer” or “Moderna” from the “Any vaccine” drop-down. You can also call 877-VAX-4NYC (877-829-4692) for help finding a City-run vaccination site. To schedule a free in-home vaccination, visit nyc.gov/homevaccine or call the above number.

Is a third dose free?
Yes, a third dose is free for people who are eligible to get one. If you have insurance, it may be billed, but you will not be charged an administration fee or other fee.

What documentation do I need to get a third dose?
You will need to show a document with your date of birth, such as a driver’s license, non-driver ID, IDNYC, birth certificate or passport, and attest that you have a medical condition that allows you to get a third dose.

Can people who are immunocompromised stop taking other precautions after getting a third dose?
No. People who are immunocompromised are at increased risk for serious COVID-19 illness, and the vaccine may work better for some people who are immunocompromised than others. For this reason, regardless of your vaccination status, you should continue taking all precautions, including avoiding crowds (especially indoors), wearing a mask and practicing physical distancing whenever you are outside your home. Also, it is especially important for people who are living or in regular contact with someone who is immunocompromised to get vaccinated and follow other COVID-19 precautions.

What should people who are immunocompromised do if they have symptoms of COVID-19 or are exposed to someone with COVID-19?
Regardless of vaccination status, people who are immunocompromised and have COVID-19 symptoms or are exposed to someone with COVID-19 should get tested and contact their health care provider right away to discuss monoclonal antibody treatment and prevention options. Monoclonal antibodies are more effective the sooner they are given. This treatment is not a substitute for vaccination. For more information, visit on.nyc.gov/antibody-treatment.

The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves.