

UPDATE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)



Stay informed. Take precautions. Stay safe.

Dear Members,

Please read the update below from Secretary Chen with information on a COVID-19 prevention toolkit, testing, and boosters.

A Message on Behalf of EOEA Secretary Elizabeth Chen

Dear Colleagues,

I am reaching out to share a few updates related to COVID-19. The Department of Public Health recently released [a toolkit on ways to protect yourself, your family, and your community from COVID-19](#). This includes information on treatment options and is available in multiple languages. We hope you will use, post, and share the flyer and other communication tools with your networks.

Additionally, as of April 4th, [Medicare Part B beneficiaries, including those enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan, now have access to Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\) approved, authorized, or cleared over-the-counter COVID-19 tests at no cost](#). **People with Medicare can get up to eight tests per calendar month from participating pharmacies and health care providers for the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency.**

Finally, on March 29, 2022, the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) issued updated guidance](#) regarding a second booster dose for **individuals over the age of 50**.

Eligible residents may access booster doses from more than 1,000 locations, with appointments readily available for booking across the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth has the capacity to administer over 150,000 boosters weekly across the state.

- Visit [Vaxfinder](#) for a full list of locations
- **For individuals who are unable to use [Vaxfinder](#), or have difficulty accessing the internet**, the COVID-19 Vaccine Resource Line can help schedule appointments by calling 2-1-1 and following the prompts for assistance (Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 6:00 PM, Saturday and Sunday 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM). The COVID-19 Vaccine Resource Line is available in English and Spanish and has translators available in approximately 100 additional languages.
- **For individuals who cannot reasonably leave their homes**, call (833) 983-0485 to contact the [In-Home Vaccination Program](#). Representatives from CDR Maguire, which is operating

the call center, scheduling appointments, and delivering in-home vaccinations are available Monday through Friday from 9 AM to 5 PM.

If you are interested in hosting a vaccination clinic, please reach out to the [Mobile Vaccination Program](#).

Please see below for a few frequently asked questions (FAQs) regarding the second booster dose:

Q: Why are you making a second booster of an mRNA vaccine available to people who previously received the J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine?

A: For individuals who previously received a J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine, data reveal that mRNA vaccines provide the most effective and safe protection against infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 and severe illness. Of note, a new CDC report shows that adults who received the J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine as both their primary dose and booster dose had lower levels of protection against COVID-19-associated emergency department and urgent care visits during Omicron compared to those who received an mRNA booster dose.

Q: Which type of COVID-19 vaccine can eligible people receive as a second booster dose?

A: They have the option to receive a second booster dose of either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines.

Q: What is your guidance for immunocompromised people? Should they be receiving a fifth dose?

A: Under this update, people (ages 12 years and older if they received the Pfizer-BioNTech series, or ages 18 years and older if they received the Moderna series) who are moderately or severely immunocompromised may now receive 5 doses total (a primary series of 3 doses, plus 2 booster doses). People who are moderately or severely immunocompromised—and who received a single J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine primary series—are now able to receive a total of 4 vaccine doses: 1 J&J/Janssen dose, 1 additional mRNA dose, and 2 booster doses.

Q: Can people ages 50 years and older who received a J&J/Janssen primary dose and a J&J/Janssen booster get 2 booster doses of an mRNA vaccine?

A: No. People ages 50 years and older who received a J&J/Janssen primary dose and J&J/Janssen booster dose at least 4 months ago are able to receive 1 mRNA COVID-19 booster.

Q: For those eligible to receive a second booster dose now, will they be able to get another one this fall?

A: FDA and CDC will continue to discuss the data and need for a booster dose this fall. We anticipate those who choose to get a second booster now may still need additional doses later this year, if authorized. In the meantime, with cases of COVID-19 rising again in some parts of the world—and the possibility that the U.S. will experience another uptick in COVID-19 cases in the coming months—this update allows these individuals the option to increase their individual protection now. Another booster dose could help restore protection that may wane over time, and provide peace of mind for those who want optimal protection as soon as possible.

Thank you for your continued partnership. Please reach out to Amanda Bernardo at Amanda.Bernardo@mass.gov if you need additional information.

With gratitude,
Elizabeth C. Chen, PhD, MBA, MPH
Secretary, Executive Office of Elder Affairs

If you have any questions, please contact us at Mass-ALA@mass-ala.org

**The information provided in this COVID-19 update is solely for general informational purposes to assist in understanding the evolving guidance regarding the current COVID 19 public health threat. It is not intended to be a primary public health or medical resource but is provided as a clearinghouse for or compilation of various guidance issued by official and related sources.*

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