



Things to Know About the NEW COVID VACCINES



The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) signed off on updated versions of coronavirus vaccine that target a more recent variant of the virus that was behind the summer surge in COVID-19 cases.

The new shots – one from Moderna, another from Pfizer/BioNTech and a third from Novavax – are making their way to pharmacies and doctors' offices across the country. These updated vaccines meet the agency's rigorous, scientific standards for safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing quality.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE UPDATED COVID-19 VACCINES

1 The mRNA vaccines target a FLiRT variant

This summer, the FDA recommended that vaccine manufacturers target the KP.2 coronavirus strain, a member of the FLiRT variant, in the 2024-2025 COVID Moderna & Pfizer vaccines.

2 An updated vaccine from Novavax is authorized

Novavax's vaccine – which uses a more traditional (protein-based) technology from the mRNA vaccines – was authorized by the FDA on Aug. 30 for individuals 12 and older.

Instead of targeting the KP.2 variant, Novavax's 2024-2025 vaccine targets JN.1, which the company describes as the 'parent strain' of currently circulating variants and is expected to provide strong protection from the variants that are spreading.

3 Another shot can restore waning immunity

Immunity from this vaccine diminishes over time, so the vaccine you received last year isn't providing you with optimal protection now.

4 Vaccines can reduce the risk of long COVID

Beyond restoring protection from a short-term illness, the [CDC](#) says, the vaccines can reduce the likelihood of suffering the effects of long COVID, marked by symptoms such as brain fog, fatigue, headaches and joint and muscle pain.

5 Virtually everyone should get new vaccine

The CDC recommends that everyone 6 months and older get an updated COVID vaccination once it's available.

6 The (mostly mild) side effects remain the same

Not everyone experiences side effects after vaccination, but some people do. The FDA says for those individuals, the common side effects can include pain, swelling and redness at the injection site, fatigue, headache, muscle pain, chills, nausea & fever.

7 You can get your COVID and flu shots at the same time

If you're looking to save time and an extra trip to the clinic, you can get your COVID vaccine and flu shot – even the RSV vaccine – at the same time. The optimal time to get the flu shot is September and October, the CDC says.

PAYING FOR A COVID VACCINE

Most people with Medicare, Medicaid and private insurance can get an updated COVID vaccine at no cost through their health plans, the CDC says.

For individuals without insurance, you can contact the Westfield Regional Health Department at 908-789-4070 for information about free vaccines.