What is a booster shot?

Vaccines are effective at reducing the risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and death from a virus. A booster shot is an extra dose of a vaccine. Sometimes, a vaccine's protection against a virus fades over time. You may have received booster shots for vaccines before. Vaccines that come with booster shots are chickenpox, measles, and tetanus. The COVID-19 vaccines have booster shots, too. This extra dose helps your body fight infection by increasing your protection against the virus.

I GOT MY COVID-19 VACCINE!

COVID-19 Booster Shots

Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson are approved COVID-19 vaccines in the United States. These brands offer COVID-19 booster shots. Just after Thanksgiving, the CDC released updated booster shot guidelines for the COVID-19 vaccines. These updated guidelines may help protect you against the Omicron COVID-19 variant, which was recently detected.

If you received both doses of the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, you should get a booster shot if you are over the age of 18. It is time to get a booster shot if it has been 6 months or more after your second dose of Pfizer or Moderna.

If you received a dose of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine, you should get a booster shot if you are over the age of 18. If it has been 2 months or more since your dose of Johnson & Johnson, it is time to get a booster shot.

To read about the updated CDC guidelines on booster shots, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/ vaccines/booster-shot.html. This website is updated frequently.

> Booster shots are approved by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

COVID-19 booster shot Q&A

Where can I get a booster shot? You can schedule your booster shot the same way you scheduled your last COVID-19 vaccine. Many people choose to get the vaccine at a local pharmacy. Other options are available through the health department. The Baltimore City Health Department's weekly vaccination schedule can be found here https://coronavirus.baltimorecity.gov/ covid-19-vaccine-information/weekly-schedule-vaccination-clinics. You can register for your first dose, second dose, or booster shot of the COVID-19 vaccine by visiting https://covax.baltimorecity.gov/en-US/ or calling 443-984-8650. If you use social media, you can follow the Baltimore City Health department for updates. Follow @Bmore_Healthy on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Additional options are visiting https://www.vaccines.gov, texting your ZIP code to 438829, or calling 800-232-0233 to find locations near you. To find more information about booster shots in Maryland, visit https:// covidlink.maryland.gov/content/vaccine/booster-shots/.

Do I need a prescription to get a booster shot? Does it cost? COVID-19 vaccines and booster shots are immediately available without a prescription or doctor's order. COVID-19 vaccines and booster shots are free through the Baltimore City Health Department. You do not need health insurance if you choose to be vaccinated through the health department. If you

Contents

choose to get a vaccine from your pharmacy or primary care provider, you may need to provide proof of health insurance. If you have health insurance, you will not have to pay out-of-pocket for the COVID-19 vaccines or booster shot.

Do I need to get the same shot as before? No, you do not need to get the same shot as before. The CDC and FDA reported that it is safe to mix and match brands. This means that you can get Pfizer, Moderna, or Johnson & Johnson booster shots regardless of which shot you received before. All of these booster shots will protect you from COVID-19. If you are more comfortable getting the same shot as before, you can choose to get the same shot.

> You can get a flu shot at the same time as your COVID booster shot

What should I bring to my appointment? Please bring your COVID-19 vaccination card with you to your appointment. Your medical provider will need to update your card with information about your booster shot.

Will I have side effects from the booster shot? Some people have reported temporary side effects such as fever, headache, fatigue, or pain at the injection site. Side effects are signs that the vaccine is working in your body. Not everyone experiences side effects. You are still protected against COVID-19 if you do not experience side effects from the booster shot.

Can I get a flu shot at the same time? According to the CDC, you can get the flu shot and the COVID-19 shot at the same time. Some officials recommend getting the shots in different arms, but it isn't necessary. The side effects for the flu shot are the same as the side effects of the COVID-19 shot.

Where can I get a COVID-19 test? If you have been exposed to COVID-19, it is important to get a COVID-19 test. You can benefit from testing even if you have been vaccinated. To find testing locations in Baltimore, visit https://coronavirus.baltimorecity.gov/where-get-tested-covid-19-baltimore-city or call 211. COVID-19 testing is free through the Baltimore City Health Department. You do not need health insurance.

Replacing your COVID-19 vaccination card

Many employers and businesses require people to provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination. If you are vaccinated, you should have a COVID-19 vaccination card. If you lost this card, you can get a replacement.

Maryland MyIR is a free online service people can use to find their official vaccination records, including COVID-19 vaccines. These vaccination records are from ImmuNet, Maryland's secure immunization information system. You will need to register for a MyIR account to get your immunization records. Visit https://md.myir.net/rorl to register. Follow the website's prompts to create an account and view your vaccination records. You may view and print your records from this website.

If you do not have internet access or prefer to speak to someone about replacing your vaccine card, call the MDGoVax hotline at 1-855-634-6829. You may also call your vaccine provider to see if they have your vaccination records on file. For more information on replacing your vaccination card, visit https://www.umms.org/coronavirus/covid-vaccine/get-vaccine/vaccine-card-replacement.
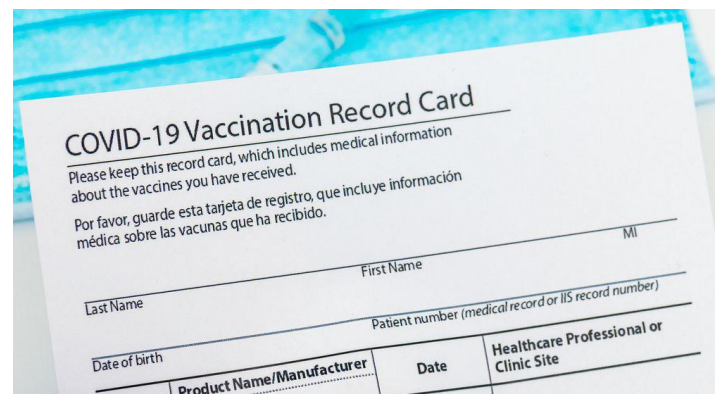
Tips to protect your COVID-19 vaccination card

- Keep your vaccination card in a safe place at home.
- Use your smartphone to take a photo of the front and back of your vaccination card.
- Do not laminate your card. This prevents healthcare providers from writing new information on your card, such as documentation of your booster shot.
- Avoid sharing photos of your vaccination card on social media. Scammers can use personal information such as your name, date of birth, or patient number to commit fraud.

Flu shots

Millions of Americans get the flu each year. The flu is a respiratory illness caused by a virus. It spreads easily from person to person. Flu symptoms include cough, sore throat, runny nose, fever, body aches, and fatigue. You can prevent the flu by getting a flu shot, washing your

hands often, and by staying away from people who are sick.

Flu season and COVID-19 are overlapping again this year. COVID-19 and the flu have similar symptoms, even though they are caused by different viruses. Older adults are at a higher risk for both COVID-19 and the flu. The flu shot does not cause the flu. It creates antibodies that help your body fight the flu virus. Visit https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/flu.html to learn more about the flu.

Many locations offer flu shots. Stores like CVS, Walgreens, Giant, and Safeway offer flu shots. The pharmacies inside these stores can give you an immunization schedule. Your primary care provider can give you a flu shot in the medical office. You can also visit https://www.vaccines.gov/ or call 1-800-232-0233 to find flu shot locations in your zip code. If you do not have health insurance, you can call 311 to review your flu shot options in Baltimore City. You may also call the local health department at 410-396-4398.

Reentry anxiety

Many people have experienced worry and isolation during COVID-19. Between staying at home more often and practicing social distancing, our lives have changed a lot since the pandemic started. Returning to "normal" can trigger feelings of stress and anxiety as the world is opening back up.

You may be experiencing reentry anxiety if you feel worried about returning to social activities that were on hold during the pandemic. Situations like standing in a crowded line, sitting in a waiting room, attending a gathering, or struggling to make conversation with others can create anxiety. It may take patience and self-compassion to feel comfortable in these situations again.

Mindfulness techniques help many people manage anxiety symptoms. These techniques are powerful tools that calm the body and mind.

Rainbow grounding. Look around the room and find one thing that is red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. This exercise can be done anywhere, and gives your mind a chance to focus on the present moment.

Engage the senses. Breathe deeply while you find 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste. For example, watching birds fly overhead, petting a dog, listening to a favorite song, smelling a candle, and sipping a cup of tea are all sensory experiences. This exercise can distract your mind from worries and help you focus on the present.

Meditate. Meditation is a practice that can calm your body's stress response. Meditation can be as simple as closing your eyes and taking deep breaths for one minute. You can also find a phrase, affirmation, or verse that uplifts you, and repeat it to yourself several times. If you prefer a guided meditation, UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center has free audio online at https://www.uclahealth.org/marc/mindful-meditations.

For help with anxiety, please consider using these helpful resources:

Pro Bono Counseling Project. The Pro Bono Counseling Project offers free therapy in Maryland. Licensed volunteer therapists are available to support individuals, couples, and families. Contact https://probonocounseling.org/ or call 410-825-1001.

Crisis Text Line. The Crisis Text hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week throughout the U.S. The Crisis Text Line connects people to a crisis counselor who can provide support. Visit https://www.crisistextline.org/ or text HELLO to 741741 to get started.

SAMHSA Treatment Referral Helpline. Visit https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/ or call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) to find a referral for a mental health provider in your area.

HANDLS. Participants may contact us for help finding a referral for a licensed therapist in your area. Email HANDLS@mail.nih.gov or call 443-431-0909 to speak with a clinical staff member who can help you locate supportive counseling services.

Contacting HANDLS

Did you know that HANDLS has an email address? Email is a great way to keep in touch with our team. If you'd like to be added to the HANDLS email list, please message us at handls@mail.nih.gov. We look forward to hearing from you!

HANDLS
National Institute on Aging
Biomedical Research Center
251 Bayview Blvd
Baltimore MD 21224-2816

Our mobile research vehicles are parked at 5225 Hamilton Ave
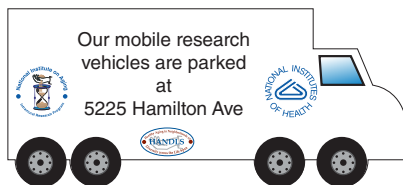
U.S Department of Health and Human Services
National Institutes of Health • National Institute on Aging

Newsletter for the HANDLS community

The purpose of this study is to learn about changes in health over time. Using our medical research vehicles, we want to study as many people with different backgrounds as we can. We want this study to help us understand healthy aging by examining the influences of different backgrounds on changes in health over time. The information we gather will help improve health and prevent disabilities. Our goal is to gather information to improve health and prevent disabilities for people of all backgrounds, particularly in minority communities and communities with limited resources.

For information about our study call 877-677-9538 or visit our website https://handls.nih.gov.