 <p>BRITISH COLUMBIA</p>	<p>Ministry of Health</p> <p><i>Issued: February 2022</i> <i>Revised:</i></p>	<p>COVID-19 booster dose for Health Care Workers</p> <p>Information Bulletin</p>
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Background

In March 2020, BC's Provincial Health Officer declared a public health emergency due to COVID-19. Enhanced protection measures, aimed at limiting the spread of the virus, were put in place in our acute, long-term care, seniors' assisted living, and congregate living settings to protect staff, patients, and residents. These measures have been effective in minimizing the risk of introduction and transmission of COVID-19 in settings where many of our most vulnerable citizens live and/or receive care.

Our health care workers have stood at the frontline against COVID-19 for the past two years. Their dedication during this global pandemic has been remarkable. They have shown their outstanding commitment in so many different ways, such as adopting enhanced infection prevention and control measures, explaining the evolving COVID-19 protocols to patients, residents, and family members, and promptly receiving their full COVID-19 vaccine series.


The most recent protection measure, to further minimize the spread of the virus in our health care settings, is ensuring that a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine is accessible to every health care worker six months after their second dose.

What is a booster dose?

- A booster dose is an additional shot of vaccine that helps you maintain and lengthen your protection against severe outcomes of COVID-19 infections, including infections by the various variants of concern.
- Research shows that the initial vaccine series (two doses) protects you very well against severe disease for many months, but vaccine effectiveness does decrease over time. A booster gets your immunity back up to a desirable level of protection, ensures a longer-lasting protection and sometimes even completely prevents the infection.
- Breakthrough infections among fully vaccinated individuals do happen because vaccines are not 100% effective against all symptomatic infections. However, the vast majority of these infections in fully vaccinated individuals are expected to be mild or even asymptomatic.
- Hospitalizations, severe disease, and death from COVID-19 among the fully vaccinated are rare.

Why should health care workers get a booster?

- Getting the recommended booster dose ensures you continue to get a robust protection against COVID-19 and its many variants of concern, for a longer period of time.
- By getting your booster, you are protecting yourself, you are saving lives, lowering the risk of spreading COVID-19, and choosing to participate in the sustained protection for everyone.
- The people you work with are some of the most vulnerable to the disease. Older people and those with chronic health conditions have a significantly increased risk of developing severe illness, complications, and dying from COVID-19.
- Emerging evidence from the UK, Scotland, Denmark and England is showing that a booster dose reduces the risk of infection and of symptomatic infection. There is also emerging evidence from Denmark of a reduction in household transmission when a sick member in the household is boosted.
- Recent data from BC shows that the booster dose can prevent as much as 60% of infections with Omicron meaning you are that much less likely to get it yourself or to pass it on to your family, coworkers or the residents and patients you care for.
- All health care workers are eligible and prioritized to receive their booster dose now, as long as it has been six months since their second dose.
- Even if you've already had COVID-19, you should still get your booster dose as you remain vulnerable to future infections. Even if you've recovered from COVID-19 the infection may not have generated a robust immune response. The booster dose ensures you have a high level of protection that can last longer.

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Need more information?

As the research and evidence evolves, we will learn more about the Omicron variant, and the effectiveness of the booster dose. There is a lot of COVID-19 vaccine information but not all of it is reliable. We encourage you to check these sources for the latest and most trusted information:

- BC Centre for Disease Control: www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine
- BC Ministry of Health: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/vaccine/booster