

# The COVID Vaccine - Fall 2023 Updates

## Updated Vaccine. Multiple Options.

In September 2023, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved two updated mRNA COVID vaccines for use in the prevention of severe disease, manufactured by Moderna and Pfizer. These updated vaccines are monovalent and targeted against the most recent variant of the virus, Omicron XBB 1.5, that is circulating. The FDA is referring to these as 2023-2024 formulas.

The FDA also approved a third COVID vaccine manufactured by Novavax. This vaccine is monovalent and targets the same variant and is considered one of the 2023-2024 formulas. The Novavax vaccine is not an mRNA vaccine but is rather an adjuvant vaccine which uses proteins from the virus, similar to the annual flu vaccine.



Unfortunately, terms like “mRNA,” “monovalent,” and “booster” have created confusion for many of us, and, in particular, for nursing home populations where many residents are over age 65 and/or have relative degrees of immunocompromise.

Today, almost all of us have antibodies to SARS-CoV-2, either due to prior infection or vaccination. We’re at a place from a population standpoint where vaccination **should** continue to be simplified.

### **There are a few key talking points that clarify communication:**

- These three 2023-2024 formula vaccines represent the most current COVID vaccines available. That is, these vaccines target the current types, or “strains,” of COVID circulating in the community. Compare this to an annual flu shot, where we ask each year if the “formulation” of the vaccine covers the current “strain” of flu. And as COVID mutates, our vaccine will likely change again in the future.
- The Novavax formulation is a different type of vaccine than the mRNA vaccines made by Pfizer and Moderna; however, the target COVID strain is the same.
- Regardless of age or prior COVID vaccination status, FDA is recommending one of these updated vaccines. If someone has had a COVID vaccine recently, they should wait two months before receiving an updated vaccine.
- If you are immunocompromised, it may be beneficial to receive this updated vaccine, but that decision should be made between provider and patient.
- We can expect FDA guidance to continue to change as the virus does, but it appears we are moving into a more regular vaccine-update schedule.

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