

# Bivalent COVID-19 Vaccine Boosters

In the fall of 2022, the province of British Columbia launched a COVID-19 vaccine booster campaign to help British Columbians stay up to date with their COVID-19 vaccinations. Keeping up to date with COVID-19 vaccination is critical in protecting against serious illness and severe health outcomes such as [long COVID-19](#) and even death. Following rigorous review for safety and efficacy, Health Canada has approved the adapted Moderna Spikevax and Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty bivalent COVID-19 vaccines.<sup>i</sup> These vaccines target both the original virus strain causing COVID-19 illness as well as the dominant and highly transmissible Omicron variant so that all Canadians are provided with the best protection possible.



## What Is a Bivalent Vaccine

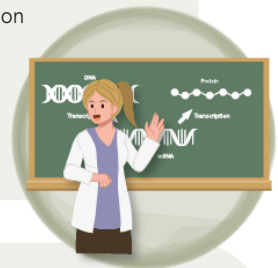
A 'bivalent' vaccine is formulated to target two strains of a virus.<sup>ii</sup> In this case, both the Moderna Spikevax and the Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty bivalent COVID-19 vaccines are formulated to target the original strain of the SARS-CoV-2 virus from 2019 and the Omicron variant.<sup>iii</sup>

### Did you know?

Bivalent or 'combination' vaccines are very common, the most common of which includes the annual influenza (flu) vaccine, which is often 'trivalent' or 'quadrivalent,' protecting against three and four strains of influenza, respectively.

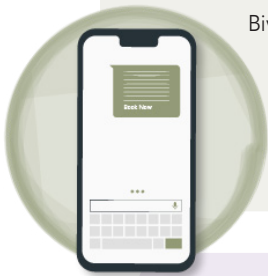
## How Bivalent COVID-19 Vaccines Work

Both bivalent COVID-19 vaccines are [mRNA \(messenger RNA\) vaccines](#), just like the original Moderna Spikevax and Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty vaccines that were authorized in 2020.<sup>iv</sup> In fact, the bivalent vaccines are comprised of the same mRNA formulation that was used in the earlier two vaccines, plus an additional mRNA sequence that focuses on protecting against Omicron.<sup>v</sup> Using mRNA, the vaccine teaches the body what the virus looks like, so it can build antibodies to protect against infection, should it occur in the future. As such, both Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech bivalent vaccines are highly effective and provide excellent protection. With the highly transmissible Omicron variant still circulating and posing a risk to the health of our communities, the bivalent COVID-19 vaccine provides broader, more robust protection.



## How to Get the Bivalent COVID-19 Vaccine

Bivalent COVID-19 vaccines will be offered to all British Columbians over the age of 18 when they schedule their next booster dose appointment.<sup>vi</sup> British Columbians will receive a link through the provincial [Get Vaccinated system](#) to book an appointment for their booster dose when it's their turn, based on age, underlying health conditions, time interval since the previous dose, and other factors. When it comes time to schedule, the bivalent vaccine will be available at all locations where COVID-19 vaccines are offered, including vaccine clinics, long term care and assisted living facilities, and pharmacies.<sup>vii</sup>



## Why It's Important to Get a Vaccine Booster

Staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations including receiving booster doses is the most reliable form of protection against illness caused by COVID-19.<sup>x</sup> By maintaining a regular vaccination schedule and receiving either of the highly effective bivalent COVID-19 vaccine boosters, your immune system gets the 'boost' it needs.

## Other Resources

- [Omicron Subvariants: BA.4 and BA.5](#)
- [COVID-19 Omicron Subvariant BA.2](#)
- [Understanding the COVID-19 \(SARS-CoV-2\) Variants](#)
- [Why It's Important to Get Your COVID-19 Vaccine Booster](#)
- [BC Centre for Disease Control \(BCCDC\): Vaccines Available in BC](#)
- [GovBC: Get a COVID-19 Booster](#)
- [Health Canada: Bivalent COVID-19 mRNA vaccines](#)
- [National Advisory Committee on Immunization \(NACI\): Recommendations on the use of bivalent Omicron-containing mRNA COVID-19 vaccines](#)

### Did you know?

The COVID-19 and influenza (flu) vaccines can be safely given at the same time.<sup>xi</sup> Those who receive their invitation to book their bivalent COVID-19 booster may also schedule their flu vaccine at the same appointment.<sup>xii</sup>

<sup>i</sup> Health Canada. 'Health Canada authorizes first bivalent COVID-19 booster for adults 18 years and older.' Sept 1, 2022; ImmunizeBC. 'Question: Has the Pfizer bivalent vaccine been approved by Health Canada?' Oct 3, 2022; Zimonjic P and Miller A. CBC. 'Health Canada approves Pfizer's new bivalent COVID-19 vaccine.' Oct 7, 2022; Health Canada. 'Drug and vaccine authorizations for COVID-19: List of applications received.' Sept 20, 2022.

<sup>ii</sup> ImmunizeBC. 'What is a "bivalent" COVID-19 vaccine?' Sept 22, 2022; BC Centre for Disease Control and BC Gov. 'COVID-19 in BC: Fall Booster Campaign Technical Briefing for Media September 6, 2022, Dr. Bonnie Henry BC Provincial Health Officer.' Sept 6, 2022.

<sup>iii</sup> Health Canada. 'Health Canada authorizes first bivalent COVID-19 booster for adults 18 years and older.' Sept 1, 2022.

<sup>iv</sup> Health Canada. 'Moderna Spikevax COVID-19 vaccines.' Sept 1, 2022.

<sup>v</sup> Health Canada. 'Moderna Spikevax COVID-19 vaccines.' Sept 1, 2022.

<sup>vi</sup> GovBC. 'Get a COVID-19 booster.' Sept 28, 2022.

<sup>vii</sup> BC Centre for Disease Control and BC Gov. 'COVID-19 in BC: Fall Booster Campaign Technical Briefing for Media September 6, 2022, Penny Ballem MD FRCP, Senior Executive Lead, Immunize BC COVID-19 Vaccine Program.' Sept 6, 2022.

<sup>viii</sup> ImmunizeBC. 'COVID-19 FAQ.' 2022; ImmunizeBC. 'Question: Can the COVID-19 vaccine be given at the same time as other vaccines, such as the influenza (flu) vaccine?' Sept 22, 2022.

<sup>ix</sup> GovBC. 'Province prepares for fall respiratory viruses, encourages people to get vaccinated.' Sept 28, 2022.

<sup>x</sup> BC Centre for Disease Control. 'Getting a Vaccine.' Sept 6, 2022.



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