

Do you need a Spring COVID Booster?

Recently, the WHO, NACI and our Medical Officer of Health, Dr Moore, recommended that certain people should get a spring COVID booster. These recommendations come from the most recent studies showing who is still at higher risk to end up in hospital or to die if they get COVID. Prioritizing this group for additional vaccinations, will help prevent our hospitals and health care system from becoming even more overwhelmed and help keep the system open to those with other health needs. These data have also shown that waiting 6 months between boosters, or after a COVID infection, often gives better protection against severe illness than getting a booster after 3 months.

The good news is, that if you are young (under 65), healthy, have had 3+ shots and have had COVID, you are well protected against severe illness from all current variants and probably will not need another booster for at least 1 year after your last infection or vaccination. If you have had a booster after the end of September 2022, you are even better protected. For children under 5 years of age, there is no approved booster yet, but the primary series seems to be working well enough so far.

So, who is at high risk, and when should they get a booster?

Pregnancy still increases the risk for serious illness and medical complications that can affect the health of both the mother and the baby. Getting vaccinated or boosted during pregnancy is very safe and effective. This will also help protect your baby during their first few months of life, as young infants are also more likely to be hospitalized with COVID.

People over 80 are still at the highest risk for being admitted to hospital, followed by those over 65, particularly if they have any health problems or have not yet had COVID. Seniors, and those over 18 who are moderately immune compromised, should keep getting booster every 6 months for now.

Boosters are also recommended for those who live in a communal settings – group home, retirement/assisted living, or long-term care home, if they are over 55, or have multiple medical conditions or are in poor health. Those over 55 who are or live with someone who identifies as First Nations, Inuit, or Metis, should also get a booster.

Children over 5yrs – who are immunocompromised or have significant underlying medical conditions should also get a bivalent booster, 6 months after their last shot or infection. Anyone over 5 who has not had a booster since September, is also encouraged to get a bivalent shot if you have not recently had COVID.

Those 18 -65 who feel they are at increased risk from COVID for other reasons, may be able to get a second bivalent booster after 6 months but are encouraged to discuss this with their health care or vaccination provider.

Vaccinations continue to be available through many local pharmacies as well as regularly scheduled vaccination clinics in Belleville. Unfortunately, as our funding ended on March 31st, we will be closing the Picton vaccination clinic on April 25th.

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