

Talking points: Bivalent boosters and safer holidays

Bivalent boosters

- The updated COVID-19 booster provides the best level of protection against severe cases of COVID-19.
- Everyone age 5 and older should get an updated booster when eligible.
- This booster was made to fight strains of COVID-19 that are more commonly circulating through our communities right now (Omicron BA.4 and BA.5). Previous shots were effective for fighting serious illness and hospitalization against the original strain of COVID-19, but they were not specifically targeted to the strains we face today.
- We also know that the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines against serious illness and hospitalizations decreases over time. If you have not had a booster recently – it is important that you prioritize getting an updated booster as you may not be well protected by vaccines whose effectiveness has decreased.
- COVID-19 vaccines, including the updated boosters, are safe. They help protect people from getting very sick and may decrease the risk of long-term complications from COVID-19.
- As we approach the holidays, it is more important than ever that you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccinations to keep yourself, your family and your communities safe from severe illness or hospitalization from COVID-19.
- It is easy and free to get your updated COVID-19 booster. Learn more about where to get this updated vaccine at [Find COVID-19 Vaccine Locations \(https://mn.gov/covid19/vaccine/find-vaccine/locations/index.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/covid19/vaccine/find-vaccine/locations/index.jsp).

Safer holidays – “Celebrate Safely”

- Many of us will be gathering with family and friends during the upcoming holidays. With many respiratory diseases spreading right now, including flu, RSV, and COVID-19, it is important to take steps to help everyone celebrate safer!
- Here are some things you can do:
 - Make sure you and your family are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines and have received your annual flu vaccine. You can get both vaccines at the same visit.
 - Find COVID-19 and flu vaccine locations near you at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov). Many locations, such as pharmacies, may have both vaccines, so you can ask about getting both shots at the same time.
 - Stay home if you are feeling sick. No one wants to miss out on the celebration, but it is important to stay home so others do not get sick.
 - Wash your hands often.
 - Check the CDC COVID-19 community level before you go so you can follow appropriate public health recommendations, such as when to wear a mask. You can also wear a mask at any time, no matter what the community level is. The CDC provides an easy way to check levels by county: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>.
 - Consider COVID-19 testing before gathering, particularly if there will be people there who are at higher risk for severe disease.
- Learn more at [Protect Yourself and Others: COVID-19 \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html) and [Influenza \(www.mdhflu.com\)](https://www.mdhflu.com)