

Clarify When to Give COVID-19 Vaccine Boosters

You'll need to **clear up confusion about COVID-19 vaccines**.

Terminology. Clarify that "boosters" aim to maintain protection after an adequate initial immune response. Third or "additional doses" are for those who likely had an inadequate response to the initial series.

Also point out that boosters are given at least 6 months after a completed series...but additional doses are given earlier, at least 4 weeks after a completed series.

Boosters. Continue to recommend an mRNA COVID-19 booster (*Comirnaty* or *Spikevax*) at least 6 months after a completed primary series for long-term care residents or seniors living in congregate settings.

And follow your provincial guidance for other patients who qualify for a booster. For example, Alberta is allowing a booster for seniors 75 and older...or First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people 65 and older.

Reassure that side effects after a booster seem similar to those seen after the primary series.

Additional doses. Continue to recommend an additional mRNA COVID-19 vaccine dose to moderately to severely immunocompromised patients at least 4 weeks after a completed primary series.

Keep in mind that an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine is preferred for the booster or additional dose...regardless of whether patients had an mRNA or viral vector vaccine (AstraZeneca or Johnson & Johnson/Janssen) for their primary series.

Myocarditis. Help put the risk of myocarditis in perspective.

Explain that risk of this heart inflammation is MUCH higher from COVID-19 infection than from vaccination. Plus most postvaccination cases are mild and resolve in a few days.

Also reassure that strenuous activity after vaccination isn't shown to increase myocarditis risk. But it's okay to separate doses a few days from sports...due to expected side effects (aches, etc).

Continue to focus on vaccinating unimmunized patients.

Use our FAQ, *Communicating About COVID-19 Vaccination*, to address other concerns (Bell's palsy, etc)...and debunk myths (infertility, etc).

Key References:

-https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/statement-september-10-2021-additional-dose-covid-19-vaccine-immunocompromised-following-1-2-dose-series.html?hq_e=el&hq_m=2190151&hq_l=1&hq_v=42f995eed6#a5 (10-26-21)

-<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/statement-september-28-2021-booster-dose-long-term-care-residents-seniors-living-other-congregate-settings.html#a5> (10-26-21)

-<https://www.alberta.ca/covid19-vaccine.aspx> (10-26-21)

-<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2021/10/statement-from-the-council-of-chief-me>

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