

F.A.Q.'s answered by the Tri-Town Public Health Nurse - October 4, 2022

Q: What is a “bivalent” vaccine?

A: The new bivalent COVID-19 vaccines include a component of the original virus strain and the BA.5 omicron variant (currently circulating) to provide broad protection against COVID-19. These are called bivalent vaccines because they contain two components. A bivalent COVID-19 vaccine may also be referred to as an “updated” COVID-19 vaccine booster dose. Both Pfizer and Moderna are manufacturers of bivalent vaccines. For comparison influenza vaccines are often referred to as “quadrivalent” vaccines; as they typically contain 4 strains of the flu virus.

Q: Am I eligible, and should I get the new COVID bivalent booster?

A: Yes, everyone over age 12 is eligible for the bivalent booster vaccine, as long as it has been 2 months from their last dose of vaccine, regardless of how many vaccines they have previously received.

Pfizer Bivalent vaccine is approved for individuals over age 12.

Moderna Bivalent vaccine is approved for individuals over age 18.

Q: When will kids ages 5-11 be eligible for the bivalent booster vaccine?

A: Emergency Use Authorization is currently pending from CDC and FDA. So soon? Watch for announcement.

Q: I recently had a COVID infection, when should I get my bivalent booster?

A: There is a lot of information being gathered still on how long immunity lasts after natural infection. I would recommend you speak with your primary care provider and discuss your specific situation. The general thought is that you have some natural immunity following infection for about 90 days so you may not want or need to rush out to get a booster vaccination after a recent bout of COVID. Other factors play into this decision such as circulating variants, individual health factors and individual health risks.

Q: My mom/dad is elderly and has trouble getting out to appointments, do you make house visits for boosters?

A: Yes, Public Health Nurses will make house visits for home bound residents to administer COVID and Flu vaccines, call the health department or your COA. We have several days set up to do this!

Q: Can I get a flu shot with my COVID vaccine?

A: Yes, CDC says you can receive both vaccines at the same time.

Q: Where can I get free COVID test kits?

A: Contact your town health department and request some. We have plenty! We can put some aside for you to pick up. Your child's school nurse may have some as well. Just ask.

Q: When do my COVID-19 test kits really expire?

A: Almost all test kits have extended expiration dates of 3-12 months based on stability studies. Check online with the manufacturer.

Q: What do I need to know about Monkeypox?

A: Monkeypox is not a new disease, the virus has been around since the 1970's. It was recognized outside of non-endemic countries in May 2022. Monkeypox is a viral illness that begins with flu-like illness, lymph node enlargement, and rash. Transmission occurs by exposure to bodily fluids, sores, or respiratory droplets. The virus does not spread easily between people. As of 9/27, Over 390 reported cases in MA. Tri Town is considered a LOW RISK COMMUNITY at this time. If cases do occur, they will be handled just like any other communicable disease in the town, through the health department and by public health nurses.

Link for more info: <https://www.mass.gov/monkeypox>

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