



## PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 7, 2022

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# Bivalent COVID-19 Booster Vaccines Now Available in the Blue Ridge Health District

(Charlottesville, Va.) – Beginning today, Wednesday, September 7, 2022, the Virginia Department of Health's Blue Ridge Health District (BRHD) will begin administering Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna Bivalent COVID-19 booster vaccines to eligible community members. The new updated boosters are targeted specifically at the BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants of the Omicron variant that initially emerged in the United States in November 2021.

On August 31, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) to the two vaccines. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), a panel of independent scientific advisers to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), met September 1 and voted to recommend the Pfizer-BioNTech updated bivalent vaccine for persons aged 12 years and older and the Moderna updated bivalent vaccine for persons aged 18 years and older at least 2 months after completion of a primary series or booster dose. The CDC director endorsed the ACIP recommendations on September 1 and the Blue Ridge Health District received the booster vaccines on September 6 and 7.

**Community members can schedule an appointment for a bivalent booster vaccine through the [VASE+ system here](#).** The vaccine will be free and available to everyone ages 12+ who is eligible, regardless of citizenship status. BRHD will host vaccine clinics at local health departments, MOBI on the Mall on Wednesdays, a drive-through clinic on September 19, along with other community-based clinics as available. **A complete list of BRHD-hosted clinics can be found on our vaccine webpage [here](#).** *Please note that while BRHD is offering bivalent booster vaccines, our appointments are limited. Other healthcare providers and pharmacies in the area should be providing the latest booster vaccines as well.*

People with questions about the vaccine and their individual situations are advised to contact their healthcare providers.

To find free vaccination opportunities near you, visit the [BRHD COVID-19 vaccination website](#), [vaccinate.virginia.gov](https://vaccinate.virginia.gov), or call 877-VAX-IN-VA (877-829-4682, TTY users call 7-1-1) Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Assistance is available in English, Spanish, and more than 100 other languages.

[Schedule a COVID-19 Vaccine Appointment →](#)

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **What makes this booster different?**

The previous monovalent boosters only used mRNA from the original strain of SARS-COV-2. The new bivalent booster, however, uses two mRNA components: one from the original SARS-COV-2 strain, plus one from the strain in common between the BA.4 and BA.5 lineages of Omicron. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we've seen the SARS-COV-2 virus mutate into multiple different strains. The Omicron variant has been dominating the majority of COVID-19 cases in the US for some time now. By using

components present in some of the latest strains, the vaccine will provide better protection against COVID-19 infections caused by the Omicron variant.

### Who is eligible?

Pfizer's Bivalent booster has been approved for ages 12+, and Moderna's booster has been approved for ages 18+. To qualify for a bivalent booster, you must be at least 2 months past your completed primary series or last booster. Children ages 11 and under will continue to receive the monovalent boosters, and all ages will still receive the monovalent vaccine for their primary series. For immunocompromised individuals, ACIP recommends a monovalent vaccine for the primary series (which includes a third dose) and a Bivalent booster at least two months after completion of the primary series or a previous monovalent booster.

## Updated COVID-19 Booster Doses

New boosters are now available to provide increased protection against Omicron variants.

### When to get the updated booster

At least **2** months after your last COVID-19 dose – either a booster dose or your primary series.

### Who should get the updated booster

Individuals age **12** and up are eligible for the updated Pfizer booster, and adults age **18** and up are eligible for the updated Moderna booster.

*CDC recommendations as of September 1, 2022*



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