Booster vaccination with an mRNA vaccine
(Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna)

The mRNA vaccines provide very effective protection against severe cases of COVID-19 requiring hospital admission. But with the current variants, the protection afforded by the primary vaccination course declines rapidly. For this reason we recommend everyone from age 12 to have a booster vaccination.

What does a booster do?
The booster reminds the immune system of the pathogen. Vaccine protection against serious cases of the disease is increased and extended again. Important: With the current variants, vaccine protection against infection and mild cases of the disease is modest and short-lived. You can get COVID-19 despite having been vaccinated.

For whom is the booster vaccination recommended?
A booster is recommended for everyone aged 12 and over. The recommendation particularly applies to people who are at high risk from the coronavirus:

- People aged 65 and over
- People aged 16 and over with certain chronic illnesses
- Pregnant women

When should the booster vaccination be given?
A booster vaccination is recommended from 4 months after completion of the primary vaccination with an mRNA vaccine. The primary vaccination course is complete after:

- two doses of an mRNA vaccine; or
- confirmed infection with the coronavirus + one dose of an mRNA vaccine at least 4 weeks apart (regardless of the order).

We recommend you have the booster even if you have had a coronavirus infection after primary vaccination. The latest findings show that an infection does not provide sufficient protection from severe illness. You can have the vaccination from four weeks after the infection (taking account of the minimum interval of 4 months from the last COVID-19 vaccination).

What vaccine is administered for the booster?
Basically it does not matter which of the two available mRNA vaccines is used.

The following applies for people under 30: The recommendation is for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine to be favoured for boosters for those aged from 18 to 29. The recommendation is for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine to be used for the booster for those aged from 12 to 17. This is because in very rare cases there has been inflammation of the heart muscle or the pericardium shortly after vaccination. This has been observed more frequently after vaccination with the Moderna vaccine than after vaccination with the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccination. It is a very rare side effect that is easy to treat. Such inflammation also occurs after infection with the coronavirus.

However, the following applies to both mRNA vaccines: the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination also outweigh the potential risks for people under 30.

Where can I be vaccinated?
The cantons are responsible for vaccination. Find out where you can register and get vaccinated on the website or infoline of your canton (www.foph-coronavirus.ch/cantons) or ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Who is recommended to have an additional booster (after the first booster has been administered)?
An additional booster is currently recommended for anyone aged 80 and over. We also recommend an additional booster vaccination for people with a severely weakened immune system (due to illness or medication); in this case, consult your doctor.

An additional booster can be given starting four months after the last vaccination. It increases the protection against severe illness, at least for a certain period of time.

Have you been infected with the coronavirus since your last vaccination? Since this infection has not significantly increased your protection against severe disease, we recommend an additional booster. You can be vaccinated from four weeks after the infection (taking account of the minimum interval of four months following the last COVID-19 vaccination).

The rest of the information relating to the booster vaccination is the same as that for the primary vaccination course and is provided on the information sheet “General information on the COVID-19 vaccination with an mRNA vaccine”.

---

1 You can find the detailed list of conditions here:
List of people at especially high risk (PDF, 160 kB)