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Seniors now eligible for additional COVID-19 bivalent booster dose, COVID vaccine recommendations simplified

HONOLULU, HI – The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) supports the latest recommendations announced yesterday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), allowing an additional dose of the bivalent booster against the virus that causes COVID-19 for individuals at increased risk for severe infection. CDC's announcement also simplifies vaccination schedules to allow bivalent vaccines to be used for primary vaccination series, as well as boosters.

"These simplified recommendations make it even easier to protect yourself and your family from severe COVID-19 illness and death," said State Epidemiologist Dr. Sarah Kemble. "COVID-19 is still circulating, and we have seen a recent rise in hospitalizations. We had 10 COVID-19 deaths reported in the last week. It is definitely worth it to get a booster dose now, if you are eligible. This is particularly important for kūpuna and people who are immunocompromised."

CDC's recommendations follow the action on Tuesday April 18, 2023, by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [amending the emergency use authorization](#) of the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNtech COVID-19 bivalent mRNA vaccines to simplify the vaccination schedule for most individuals. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) met to discuss these recommendations and expressed their support.

These changes include:

- Everyone 6 years and older who has not received a bivalent vaccine dose should receive one, regardless of what vaccine was used for their primary series.
- Those who already received a bivalent vaccine booster dose do not need to take any action, unless they are 65 years or older or immunocompromised.
- Adults 65 years and older can now receive a second bivalent vaccine booster dose at least four months after their initial bivalent dose.
- People who are immunocompromised may receive additional bivalent vaccine booster doses and should consult their healthcare provider to determine the best timing for additional doses.
- Bivalent vaccine can be used for all primary series and booster doses in adults and children 6 months and up. The original monovalent COVID-19 mRNA COVID-19 vaccines will no longer be recommended for use in the United States.

DOH sent out a notice on April 18, 2023, to all Hawai'i COVID-19 vaccine providers to inform them of the FDA authorization changes.

“Hawai'i has experienced lower COVID mortality than the rest of the country, in part because our residents have been vaccinated and boosted as recommended,” added State Health Director, Dr. Kenneth Fink. “We can continue this success by remaining vigilant and following updated recommendations as they are made.”

More information about locating vaccine providers and COVID-19 vaccination guidance can be found at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov).

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