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New 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines offers enhanced protection

HONOLULU - The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) recommends use of the new 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines newly approved and authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, to protect against the most common forms of COVID-19 in Hawai'i. The new vaccines address the XBB-lineages of the Omicron variant that accounts for 99% of COVID-19 cases in Hawai'i.

The new 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines replace the previously approved/authorized Bivalent mRNA vaccines.

"The authorization of the new 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines comes at a good time. We are seeing increased numbers of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations," said State Health Director Dr. Kenneth S. Fink. "By getting the new 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine, you are taking steps to help minimize the spread of disease in our communities. This is especially important as we approach the holiday season."

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced the approval and authorization of updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine formulations on Monday, September 11, 2023. On Tuesday, September 12, 2023, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended the updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines for all persons 6 months of age and older.

For persons 5 years of age and older, the new 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines are to be administered as a single dose, at least two months since a person's last dose of any COVID-19 vaccine.

For persons under the age of 5, recommended doses and vaccination schedule will vary depending on the child's previous vaccination history and vaccine brand administered. If you have any questions, please consult with your child's physician for guidance.

For children 6 months through 18 years of age, the new, updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines will be available through the [Vaccines For Children Program](#), as well as health insurance coverage for zero out-of-pocket cost. The new, updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines should be available wherever children currently receive their other routine childhood immunizations.

Unlike previous COVID-19 vaccines, the new vaccines are not being exclusively distributed by the U.S. Government to vaccination providers. The new 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines are available through traditional pathways for purchase, distribution, and payment, including health insurance coverage.

Initial public and private sector orders of the new 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines have begun shipping and are expected to arrive in pharmacies and provider offices today and tomorrow. However, not all providers will have vaccines available at the same time as shipping timeframes will vary between manufacturers, vaccine distributors, and provider locations. Please give your providers time to ensure vaccines are received in good condition, stored properly, and inventoried in their systems, in order to properly administer and document the vaccination of patients. Scheduling of vaccination appointments will be done by individual vaccine providers once they receive delivery of their 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine supply.

Persons seeking vaccination may search for 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine providers on the [Vaccines.gov - Find COVID-19 vaccine locations near you](#) website. For uninsured and underinsured adults, the website will be updated to include a filter feature to identify locations participating in the [Bridge Access Program](#).

DOH reminds the public that, in addition to getting the new 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines, masking and physical distancing continue to be effective for protecting yourself and others against COVID-19. Additionally, good hygiene practices, such as frequent handwashing, are also highly recommended to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

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