Resistance to COVID-19 Booster Vaccines

Questions and Answers

Individuals have many reasons why they do not want to receive a COVID-19 vaccination booster shot. Understanding the rationale behind the hesitancy is important, as well as understanding the implications of not receiving a booster. These are some common concerns people give for not receiving a COVID-19 booster, followed by reasons why receiving the booster is important.

I have already had two doses of the vaccine. I do not think I need any more.

Adding a booster vaccination substantially improves your ability to avoid serious COVID-19 illness. A booster will stimulate your immune system to have more virus neutralizing antibodies. To understand this concept, see COVID-19: Who Gets Sick and Dies? (PDF).

A number of residents, who are fully vaccinated, some with boosters, got COVID-19. Therefore, the booster does not help.

The purpose of vaccination is to decrease your chance of having serious illness or death. Serious illness means you need to be in the hospital. Studies show having a booster reduces the chance of serious illness compared to people who completed the initial vaccination(s) only. See COVID-19: Who Gets Sick and Dies? (PDF) to help visualize how boosters help prevent serious illness.

Although I am fully vaccinated, I got COVID-19. Now I have immunity and do not need the booster.

Completing the initial vaccination series helped decrease the chance of serious illness. Infection after the vaccination series may increase your level of immunity; however, we do not know how much additional protection an infection causes. Therefore, a booster will give you the most defense toward future infections.

They will probably have more boosters, so I will wait until the next one.

A booster after completing an initial vaccination series increases your ability to respond to an infection. This is true for several other illnesses that have vaccines available, like hepatitis, tetanus and shingles. The booster helps your immune system to "remember" the virus. Future boosters may be needed as the virus changes, and receiving each booster will provide the greatest defense against serious illness.

There is waning immunity with booster shots, too. I can not take a shot every few months.

Completion of the initial vaccination series caused you to be able to prevent serious infection more than those who were not vaccinated. A booster will help you even more. It is common for booster shots to be required; tetanus is one example. Physicians are studying whether additional boosters or vaccinations will be needed. The current recommendations for COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Interim Clinical Considerations website.

Will the booster shot protect me against any new variants that may develop?

A virus can reproduce 1 trillion times in each person. Each time they reproduce, there is a chance of a mutation or variant. Viruses do not "live" on their own, and they require a host animal to reproduce. No one can know what mutations will occur or become successful infections. We know that decreasing the reproduction of viruses by having vaccinated people more quickly respond and defeat an infection will mean fewer variants. Health care professionals are closely monitoring for outbreaks of variants.

COVID-19 cases are down in my community, so I will wait until the next outbreak to get a booster.

The omicron variant became widespread in a matter of weeks. It is best to have your body ready to respond so you do not have serious illness. By getting a booster as soon as you are able, you will be better prepared for future outbreaks of infections. It also takes time for you to build antibodies from each vaccination.

I got both shots and got very sick after the second one. Then I got COVID-19 and it was not as bad as that second shot. I do not want another shot.

Side effects from the vaccine are well known. Most side effects only produce discomfort or a brief, mild illness. The omicron variant had more mild illnesses than the original or delta variants. People who had the original or delta variants had more serious illnesses that resulted in over-filled hospitals and Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds. People who had COVID-19 illness are also at risk for the "long" COVID illness. A booster provides a significant increase in protection from COVID-19 illness and any side effects are short term.

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