

# Is it possible to overuse COVID-19 booster shots?

With the CDC's approval of a fourth COVID-19 shot for older Americans, discourse between experts has emerged on whether more shots are necessary or not



Empty vials of the Moderna COVID-19 booster vaccine sit in a container at the Antwerp Expo vaccine center in Antwerp, Belgium on Monday, Dec. 27, 2021.

Virginia Mayo, Associated Press

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov) announced that a [fourth COVID-19 vaccine shot](https://www.cdc.gov) is available for those 50 years old and up, and those with certain health conditions.

With the rollout of the latest vaccine, there's some discourse between experts as to whether or not repeated COVID-19 shots are productive.

## Will the fourth COVID-19 vaccine shot be as effective?

Dr. Peter Marks, director of the FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, told [NPR](#):

- "There is a certain diminishing return by giving the same vaccine over and over. We have had enough evolution of this virus that it would make sense to want to try to cover some of the genetic diversity that has been introduced into the mix."

Marco Cavaleri, the Head of Vaccines Strategy of the European Medicines Agency, raised the concern that excess boosting could weaken rather than strengthen our immunity, per the [Seattle Times](#).

One strategy would be to give people a new vaccine that specifically targets omicron or one of the other variants, such as beta, Marks said. Another option would be a new vaccine that combines at least two strains into one vaccine, which could provide even broader protection against any new variants that might emerge.

"If we have a strategy in which we give boosters every four months, we will end up potentially having problems with immune response," said Cavaleri, according to [the Seattle Times](#).

Other health experts have backed up Cavaleri, arguing that boosting multiple times a year is "impractical and that vaccination efforts should focus on preventing severe illness rather than reducing mild 'breakthrough' cases among the immunized," reported [the Seattle Times](#).

## Should you get a fourth COVID-19 vaccine shot?

The CDC stated that those 60 and older and those 50 and older with underlying health conditions will benefit most from the fourth vaccine.

People who have had two doses of the vaccine, a booster, and were exposed to the omicron variant don't need the fourth shot right away, said Dr. Rochelle Walensky, CDC director to [NBC](#).

"If you've had omicron disease in the last two or three months, that really did boost your immune system quite well," said Walensky. She stated that these individuals could wait up to two to four months before getting a second booster, calling it a "personal judgement call," according to [NBC](#).

Holden T. Maecker, director of the Human Immune Monitoring Center at the Stanford University School of Medicine, said to [the Seattle Times](#). "I haven't seen any evidence to suggest that additional boosting would weaken protection or breed variants."

"Our knowledge from immunology generally suggests no such weakening or overload, as long as immunizations are sufficiently separated in time," said Maecker.

## Could the COVID vaccine be administered like the flu shot?

Another question is how often people will have to keep getting vaccinated moving forward.

"Will it be something like the yearly flu vaccine, or not?" said Dr. Anthony Fauci, to [NPR](#) in an interview. "I have to emphasize: We don't know the answer to that right now."

To discuss the issue, a [panel](#) of scientists and experts will be meeting April 6 to address questions the country has about vaccinations and to advise the Food and Drug Administration on how to deal with vaccinations going forward, reported the Seattle Times.