- Vaccination / Virus

# Fully Vaccinated & Got COVID? Here's How Long You Should Wait To Get A Booster

Qatar Tribune · 3 Jan 2022 · 06 · KATIE CAMERO (Katie Camero is a McClatchy National Real-Time Science reporter)

THE surge of COVID-19 cases across the globe is proving an unsettling yet well-known fact: you can still get infected with the coronavirus despite being fully vaccinated, even more so with the highly transmissible omicron variant.

Infection is still possible even among the boosted, but how does a positive COVID-19 test affect those who are fully vaccinated and have yet to get an extra jab You'll definitely have to wait a bit, though specific timing depends on your preferences, experts say.

Anyone 16 and older can receive a booster shot at least six months after they received their second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines or at least two months after they received their single dose of the Johnson Johnson shot. The Pfizer vaccine is the only shot currently authorized as a booster for 16- and 17-year-olds. If you catch COVID-19 before your booster, however, you should wait until you feel better and symptoms have resolved before getting it, Dr. Jorge Luis Salinas, an assistant professor of medicine focusing on infectious diseases at Stanford University in California, told McClatchy News.

Experts with Houston Methodist Hospital in Texas agree, adding you should also meet criteria to end isolation, which was recently updated, before getting your booster.

Regardless of vaccination status, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says you should isolate yourself from others for five days. If your symptoms disappear or are on their way out, you can leave isolation and should continue to wear a face mask for another five days. You don't need a negative COVID-19 test to end isolation.

Dr Angela Branche, an associate professor of infectious diseases and co-director of the Vaccine and Treatment Evaluation Unit at University of Rochester Medical Center in New York, said vaccinated people who have a breakthrough infection likely do not need a booster "for three to six months after they have recovered, though it would be safe to obtain a booster dose as early as two weeks after full resolution of symptoms."

That's because people who recently recover from an infection "are expected to have high levels of circulating antibodies that are likely to be broadly protective for several months," Branche said in a news release.

Salinas of Stanford also said waiting about three months after your breakthrough infection before getting a booster is "reasonable," citing immunity gained. "However, several agencies and states are starting to require a booster shot. If so, you can get your boosters as soon as you feel better." Coronavirus: Latest news Sign up for our newsletter and get updates on the coronavirus in Florida and across the nation. Vaccinated people who received a monoclonal antibody treatment for COVID-19 will also need to wait three months before getting a booster, experts say.

DO YOU NEED A BOOSTER AFTER COVID-19 BREAKTHROUGH INFECTION?

Studies show people who get infected with the coronavirus have antibodies that last at least several months, with even stronger protection acquired by the fully vaccinated. However, it's too early to confirm whether the same is true following an omicron infection.

Dr Amesh Adalja, an infectious disease expert and senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins University Center for Health Security, told McClatchy News he doesn't "think there's much benefit to getting a booster to prevent something that has already happened (a breakthrough infection), except in the immunocompromised or high risk," who are known to produce weaker responses to the shots. Adalja also said the wait period after breakthrough infection is more about giving "sufficient time as not to infect anyone" during the vaccination process.

Despite lacking data, experts suggest boosters can only help.

"We don't know the answer to this question yet, but my feeling is that if you are in a group for which boosters have been recommended, I'd still get the booster," Dr Albert Shaw, a Yale Medicine infectious diseases specialist and professor, told Verywell. "We don't know how a breakthrough infection compares to a booster vaccine." Many factors play into how your body responds to infection, such as the severity of your sickness, existing medical conditions, how much virus you were exposed to and age. But vaccination is more controlled, Shaw said, because everyone is given the same dose, offering a measured immune response that varies little from one person to another.