

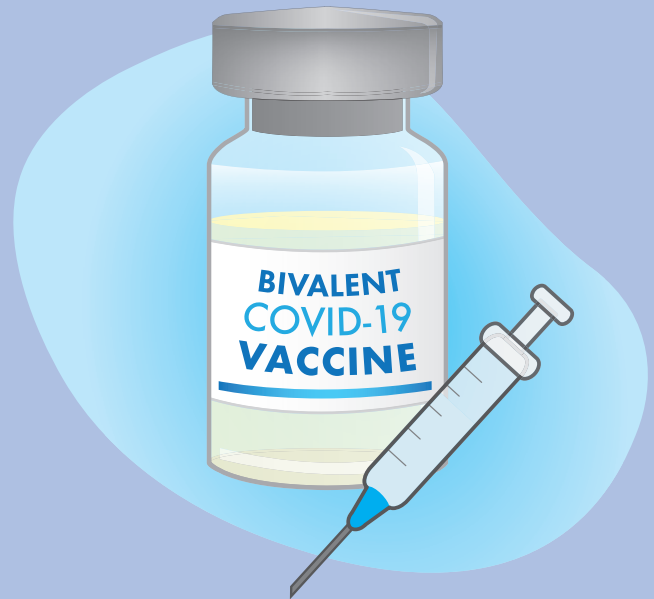
## Which bivalent vaccines are approved in Canada?

Currently, the two bivalent vaccines approved in Canada are:

- The Moderna Spikevax Bivalent COVID-19 vaccine.<sup>1</sup>
- The Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty Original and Omicron BA.4/BA.5 COVID-19 vaccine.<sup>2</sup>

## What is the difference between the Moderna and Pfizer bivalent vaccines?

- The Moderna Spikevax Bivalent COVID-19 vaccine offers protection against the original strain of the virus and the Omicron BA.1 variant.<sup>1,3</sup>
- The Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty Original and Omicron BA.4/BA.5 COVID-19 vaccine offers protection against the original strain of the virus and the Omicron BA.4/BA.5 variants.<sup>2</sup>



## What is different about the bivalent vaccines compared to the original COVID-19 vaccines?

- Bivalent vaccines are designed to provide protection against two different types, or *variants*, of a virus.<sup>4,5</sup>
- The original vaccines are monovalent – meaning they were designed to defend against the original strain of the COVID-19 virus only.<sup>4</sup>
- The new bivalent vaccines by Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech were designed to provide protection against the original strain of the COVID-19 virus as well as the highly contagious Omicron variant and its subvariants.<sup>1,2,4</sup>
- Additionally, the bivalent vaccines are **only** being offered as booster shots.<sup>1,2</sup>

## Why do I need a booster shot?

- Booster shots are given to restore protection against COVID-19 that may have decreased over time.<sup>5,6</sup> They help maintain protection against serious COVID-19 outcomes, such as hospitalization and death, and reduce the risk of developing long COVID (or post COVID-19 condition).<sup>6</sup>

## **What is in the bivalent vaccines?**

- Like the original Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines, the bivalent vaccines contain mRNA sequences that target the original strain of the COVID-19 virus as well as the Omicron variant and its subvariants.<sup>1,2</sup>
- The new bivalent vaccines are essentially a mixture of the original vaccine (which targets the original strain of the virus) and a new vaccine that targets the Omicron variant, thus allowing for protection against both strains.<sup>7</sup>
  - This is also done for the flu shot to ensure the vaccine targets different variants of the flu virus.<sup>7</sup>

## **Who can receive a bivalent COVID-19 booster shot?**

- Individuals 18 years of age and older can receive the Moderna Spikevax Bivalent COVID-19 vaccine as a booster shot at least 4 months after completing their primary series or receiving a previous booster dose.<sup>1</sup>
- Individuals 12 years of age and older can receive the Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty Original and Omicron BA.4/BA.5 vaccine at least 3 to 6 months after completing their primary series or receiving a previous booster dose.<sup>2</sup>

## **Why do I need the bivalent COVID-19 booster shot?**

- The bivalent vaccines target the COVID-19 virus strains that are now most common in Canada.<sup>8</sup>
- Currently, approximately 98% of circulating COVID-19 cases are caused by the Omicron subvariants BA.4 and BA.5.<sup>9</sup>
- COVID-19 cases are rising again and as Canadians spend more time indoors over the winter, increasing chances of virus transmission, it is important to ensure everyone is protected.<sup>8,9</sup>
- It is hoped that the new bivalent vaccines can help prevent a possible surge in COVID-19 cases in the fall and winter that could strain health systems.<sup>8,9</sup>

## **Are the bivalent COVID-19 vaccines safe?**

- Yes. The bivalent vaccines are as safe as the original Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines with mostly mild side effects, such as<sup>1,2</sup>:
  - Pain, redness and/or swelling at the injection site
  - Fatigue
  - Headache
  - Muscle pain
  - Chills
  - Joint pain

# References

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