

September 23, 2021

To our patients,

We know many of you have questions about COVID booster shots, and we had hoped to send definitive information when the CDC issues their guidelines. Since this process is playing out in the media and can be quite confusing, we wanted to send an update here. While the FDA plays a very crucial role in the evaluation process, there is an additional role within the CDC and from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) that has yet to be completed. This is the final step for vaccine recommendations to the medical community. We are awaiting those final vaccine recommendations to guide us.

### **Should I get a booster shot?**

If you received the Pfizer series, the FDA did approve the safety of a booster dose of vaccine for a subset of the population, to be administered 6 months after the second dose in the original series of vaccination. This subset of the population includes those over the age of 65, those ages 16-64 at high risk of complications from COVID, and those with high risk of occupational exposures. However, we are awaiting a final recommendation from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) through the CDC which will be the final determinant of what is recommended for vaccine administration and should provide additional clarifying details around these recommendations. This expert committee will clarify the nuances of those who should receive a booster dose of the Pfizer vaccine at this time, and we expect a recommendation in the next 1-2 days.

### **What if I received Moderna or J&J Vaccine?**

If you received the Moderna vaccine, as of the writing of this e-mail, it is currently not recommended by the CDC to "mix and match" the mRNA vaccines. The ACIP committee may clarify this in their final announcement. Pfizer only has been approved by the FDA for a booster dose. We expect a similar set of recommendations in the coming weeks regarding Moderna which is pending FDA submission and review, and currently we would recommend waiting if you received the Moderna series.

If you received a J&J vaccine, you should wait for the upcoming review of the recently submitted information regarding a second dose of that vaccine. We expect a second dose is likely to be recommended, but will await further recommendations from both FDA then CDC regarding the timing of that and regarding who should receive a second dose based on safety and efficacy data.

### **How is a booster shot different than a third dose?**

The ACIP and CDC have already recommended a third dose of mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) for those who have received the first two doses of that series if they have conditions

that impair the ability of their immune system to generate a sufficient immune response from 2 doses of the vaccine. This is different from a booster dose for those with normally functioning immune systems. This third dose is used to complete the initial series of vaccination for those with impaired immune systems. Those people are clearly defined and include those who have:

- Been receiving active cancer treatment for tumors or cancers of the blood
- Received an organ transplant and are taking medicine to suppress the immune system
- Received a stem cell transplant within the last 2 years or are taking medicine to suppress the immune system
- Moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency (such as DiGeorge syndrome, Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome)
- Advanced or untreated HIV infection
- Active treatment with high-dose corticosteroids or other drugs that may suppress your immune response

### **What about the timing of my flu shot?**

For most of our patients, we are recommending flu shots in mid-October to mid-November as an ideal window for best protection for the duration of the typical flu season. There is no requirement to separate the flu shot from a COVID booster shot, though you may want to separate these vaccines by at least a few days if you historically experience vaccine side effects.

You may have unique circumstances that you would like to discuss with us, and you are welcome to do so at anytime. We hope that this information helps to clarify many of the questions that are out there.

Sincerely,

Drs Rick Kaner and Jen Mills