



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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New bivalent COVID-19 boosters offer enhanced protection

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) recommends the use of the first bivalent booster vaccines designed specifically to protect against original COVID-19 and the most common forms of COVID-19 in Hawai'i, the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron subvariants.

The BA.5 subvariant accounts for an estimated 91% of the COVID-19 cases in Hawai'i. The BA.4 subvariant accounts for an additional 4% of the cases in Hawai'i.

“The COVID-19 boosters we have been using do a good job of protecting us against severe illness. The new bivalent boosters are an upgrade because they take into account mutations of the COVID-19 virus to specifically address Omicron subvariants,” said State Health Director Dr. Elizabeth Char, FACEP.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued Emergency Use Authorization for the bivalent COVID-19 boosters yesterday.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and DOH recommend the bivalent booster manufactured by Pfizer-BioNTech for people age 12 and older. They recommend the bivalent booster by Moderna for adults age 18 and older.

The new bivalent vaccines are to be administered as a single booster dose to those who previously completed a primary series of COVID-19 vaccines and those who have had one or two booster doses. Bivalent boosters can only be administered if it has been at least two months since a person's most recent vaccination.

The bivalent vaccines replace previously authorized monovalent mRNA boosters for people age 12 and older. The DOH and CDC continue to recommend Pfizer's monovalent boosters for children ages 5 through 11.

The federal government allotted DOH initial orders totaling 37,800 doses of bivalent boosters. Those initial orders will arrive in the coming days. DOH will place additional orders weekly as needed.

Pharmacies and community health centers are placing orders for bivalent doses independent of DOH.

Scheduling of booster appointments will be done by individual vaccine providers once they receive delivery of bivalent boosters. Find information about providers and the services they offer by visiting the vaccine finder map at <https://hawaiicovid19.com/vaccine/>.

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