What doctors wish patients knew about COVID-19 bivalent boosters with Peter Hotez, MD, PhD

The AMA’s What Doctors Wish Patients Knew™ series provides physicians with a platform to share what they want patients to understand about today’s health care headlines.

Featured topic and speaker

AMA member Peter Hotez, MD, PhD, MD, PhD, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine and professor of pediatrics and molecular and virology and microbiology at Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children’s Hospital in Houston, discusses what patients should know about COVID-19 bivalent boosters.

Speaker

- Peter Hotez, MD, PhD, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine and professor of pediatrics and molecular and virology and microbiology at Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children’s Hospital

Transcript

Voiceover: We’ve enlisted AMA member Dr. Peter Hotez to share his knowledge and help address any confusion or concerns patients may have about the latest COVID-19 boosters. The new COVID-19 boosters, one from Pfizer and one from Moderna, were first made available in the U.S. in September.

While the original COVID-19 vaccines and boosters have proven effective at preventing death and severe illness, breakthrough infections and reinfections have become more common as the virus...
continues to evolve. These latest booster shots, both of which target the original COVID-19 strain as well as the latest Omicron variant and its subvariants, are known as bivalent vaccines.

Here are seven things that Dr. Hotez wishes patients knew about the new boosters.

**Get better protection for today—and tomorrow.** When you look at what’s maybe coming down the pike with some of these new future subvariants, those are derived from Omicron, either BA.2 or BA.5. And so by having that BA.5 in your new booster, it’ll likely give you better protection of what may be coming down the pike.

**Protection from your last shot is waning.** After you’re more than four or five months out, then booster protection does seem to wane. So if you’ve been, even if you’ve gotten one booster or two boosters already, if you’re more than four or five months out, you’re due for another booster. And the recommendation is, get your new booster with this new bivalent.

**Wait at least two months since your last shot.** Let’s say you got a booster before this new bivalent booster became available. You want to wait a minimum of two months now and most people are there.

**Get your flu shot at the same time.** One arm and one, the other arm, for flu. I find convenience means a lot because too often what'll happen is you'll get your bivalent COVID booster and say, "yeah, yeah, I'll get the flu later" and then you forget. So it's a matter of, you know, you're there, you're sitting there with the pharmacists. Just do it.

**Protect your kids, too.** Vaccinate your kids if they haven't been vaccinated. So too few Americans are, especially in their 5- to 11-year-olds, are not vaccinating them in under five. And so vaccinate or boost your children.

**Get your shot as soon as you can.** I wouldn’t wait too long because I am concerned about what’s coming down the pike in a few weeks. Ideally, you want to get that booster sufficiently ahead of going into the holiday season when you're gathering around with friends and family.

**We're not done with COVID-19.** Too many Americans are not getting the booster because they think we’re done with COVID and it’s not the case. The bottom line is get this booster.

**Voice-over:** From high cholesterol to sleep apnea and long COVID, learn what doctors wish patients knew about today’s health care headlines at ama-assn.org/wish.