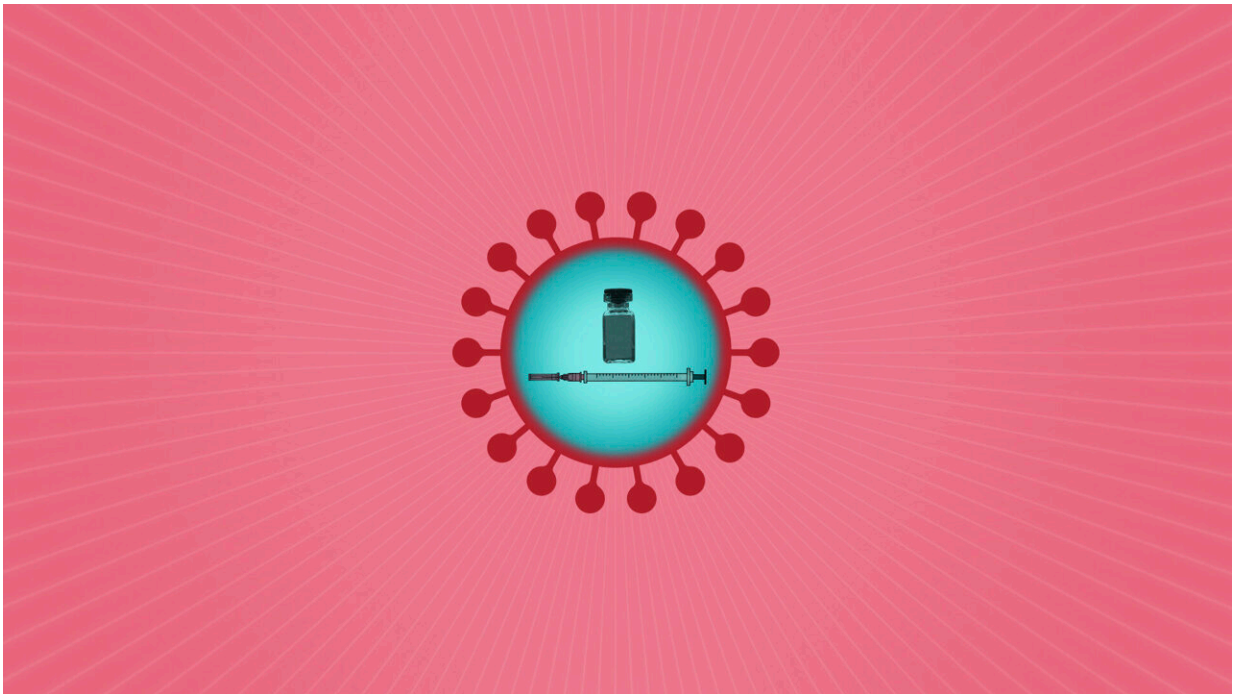


# Are COVID-19 boosters the same as the original vaccines?

November 4 2021, by Emma H. Tobin

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Are COVID-19 boosters the same as the original vaccines? Credit: AP Illustration/Peter Hamlin

Are COVID-19 boosters the same as the original vaccines?

Yes, COVID-19 boosters use the same recipe as the original shots, despite the emergence of the more contagious [delta](#) variant. The vaccines weren't tweaked to better match delta because they're still

working well.

The vaccines work by training your body to recognize and fight the spike protein that coats the coronavirus and helps it invade the body's cells. Delta's mutations fortunately weren't different enough to escape detection.

The increased protection you might get from a [booster](#) adjusted to better match the delta or other variants would be marginal, says Dr. Paul Goepfert, director of the Alabama Vaccine Research Clinic at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Manufacturing doses with a new formula would have also delayed the rollout of boosters.

Moderna and Pfizer are studying boosters tweaked for the delta and other variants to be ready if one's ever needed. Health authorities would have to decide if and when a [vaccine](#) formula swap would be worthwhile.

"What we don't know," Goepfert noted, "is if you have a delta vaccine compared to the regular vaccine, does it actually work better in preventing transmission or asymptomatic infection?"

The U.S. has authorized booster doses of the Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines for [certain people](#), and a few other countries also are using boosters of those shots or other COVID-19 vaccines.

**More information:** [What's the latest advice on the type of mask I should wear?](#)

[Can I get the flu and COVID-19 vaccines at the same time?](#)

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