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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
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27th August 2023

PRESS RELEASE: Stay up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines

On June 16th, 2023, the United States (US) Food and Drug Administration (FDA) provided an update COVID-19 vaccines for use for the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) causing COVID-19 disease⁽¹⁾.

As of July 17th, 2023, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provided updates on the current COVID-19 vaccines schedules for guidance on being up to date for ages 6 months to 4 years, 5 years, 6 years through to 50 years (recommendations for 50 years due to Republic of Marshall Islands [RMIs] Population setting with co-morbidity complications at this age group), and individuals with moderately or severely immunocompromised systems (individuals with cancer, immunosuppressant conditions, autoimmune diseases and recommendations to be inclusive of individuals with diabetes due to RMIs behavioral setting for management of diabetes)⁽²⁾.

Definition of the term Updated vaccines is sometimes called “bivalent vaccines”. The updated vaccines are called “updated” because they protect against both the original virus that causes COVID-19 and the Omicron variants BA.4 and BA.5. The two COVID_19 vaccine manufacturers, Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, have developed updated COVID-19 vaccines⁽²⁾.

The RMI Ministry of Health and Human Services Vaccine taskforce convened a meeting on August 22nd, 2023, and endorsed the recommendations and the necessary amendments stated below⁽³⁾.

**AM I UP TO DATE WITH COVID-19 VACCINES?
CHECK THE NEW, SIMPLIFIED GUIDANCE BELOW**

CHILDREN AGE 6 MONTHS - 4 YEARS		CHILDREN AGE 5 YEARS	
Pfizer Customized based on vaccination history: Should have at least 3 doses, including at least 1 bivalent dose	OR	Moderna Customized based on vaccination history: Should have at least 2 doses, including at least 1 bivalent dose	Pfizer Customized based on vaccination history: Should have at least 1 bivalent dose
		OR	Moderna Customized based on vaccination history: Should have at least 2 doses, including at least 1 bivalent dose
HEALTHY INDIVIDUALS AGE 6+		INDIVIDUALS AGE 50+	
You should receive 1 dose of a bivalent vaccine		You are eligible to receive a 2nd bivalent booster , 4 months after your bivalent dose	
IMMUNOCOMPROMISED AGE 6 MONTHS +		NOT YET VACCINATED AGAINST COVID-19	
You are eligible to receive a 2nd bivalent booster dose , 2 months after your last of bivalent dose (plus additional doses as advised by your doctor)		Just one shot of any bivalent COVID-19 vaccine gets you the best protection!	

The communities are encouraged to **ensure all children and the elderly receive their Up-to-Date COVID-19 vaccines**, which are safe and effective in preventing severity of illness due to COVID-19

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Source: 1. United States Food and Drug Administration. Updated COVID-19 Vaccines for Use in the United States Beginning in Fall 2023 [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2023 Aug 24]. Available from: <https://www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/updated-covid-19-vaccines-use-united-states-beginning-fall-2023>; 2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Stay Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2023 Aug 24]. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.htm> 3. DeKalb County Health Department. COVID-19 Vaccine in DeKalb County [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2023 Aug 27]. Available from: <https://health.dekalbcounty.org/covid-19-vaccine-in-dekalb-county/>