Is there a difference between a vaccine “booster” and “an additional dose”?
Yes. An “additional dose” (also sometimes referred to as a third dose) and a “booster” have different meanings, and the definition of the terms depends on who receives the shot.
An additional/third dose is given to people whose immune system has been moderately or severely compromised, like patients who received an organ transplant or those currently receiving treatment for cancer. This is because these individuals’ immune system probably did not build up strong enough defenses with the first two shots.
A booster is given to people whose immune system did build strong defenses with their primary shot series but whose immunity may lessen over time. The primary series is the first two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, or the first dose of Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Although all three vaccine options have shown they maintain high effectiveness against hospitalizations and deaths in most people, vulnerable individuals may benefit from a booster to counter any decrease in protection.

Who is eligible for a booster?
For individuals who received a Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine for their primary series, anyone 18 years and older is eligible for a booster shot at six months or more after completing the initial series. Those who are 50 years and older or who are 18 years and older and live in a long-term care setting should especially consider getting a booster shot.
For individuals who received the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine for their primary series, booster shots are recommended for anyone 18 and older who was vaccinated two or more months earlier.
Moderately or severely immunocompromised individuals who received Pfizer or Moderna for their primary series and additional (third) dose are eligible for a booster dose at least six months after their third dose.

Can I get a different brand of booster dose from the primary series I received?
Yes. The booster dose does not have to be from the same manufacturer as the primary shot series you received. The evidence for this decision came from a large study that determined mixing vaccines was safe and effective. While there is still a need to learn more as time goes on, the benefits of being able to offer individuals multiple booster options outweighed any risks, which are rare.

Am I still considered “fully vaccinated” without a booster dose?
Yes. Everyone is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after receiving a second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or two weeks after receiving a single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. In their discussions, both the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stressed that although boosters may be recommended for some patient groups to prevent their immunity from decreasing, most people – no matter which vaccine they received – still have strong protection against hospitalization and death with their primary shot series. People with questions about underlying medical conditions that may affect their risk of COVID-19 should ask their doctor if they need a booster dose.

Can I get a COVID-19 vaccine with other routine vaccinations?
Yes. Receiving a COVID-19 vaccine along with others vaccines is safe. It is standard practice for physicians to give all the vaccines a person is eligible for in the same visit to make sure the person doesn’t miss any recommended shots.