

Only half of U.S. nursing home residents have received boosters: CDC

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(HealthDay)—As COVID-19 cases surge nationwide, only about half of

fully vaccinated nursing home residents have received a vaccine booster dose, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports.

Research shows that the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines may decrease over time, especially among people aged 65 and older, and [early studies](#) suggest that boosters are needed in vaccinated people to maintain adequate protection against the [Omicron variant](#).

On Sept. 24, the CDC recommended that all eligible seniors and residents in [long-term care facilities](#) be given a COVID-19 vaccine booster. However, by the end of October, only about a quarter of fully vaccinated nursing [home](#) residents had received a booster, and the rate now stands at 51%, even though 80% are eligible for a booster, new CDC data shows.

According to the [latest CDC data](#), 87% of U.S. nursing home residents are fully vaccinated, compared with 60% of the [general population](#).

Earlier in the COVID-19 pandemic, the [federal government](#) worked with major pharmacy chains to get vaccinations to nursing home residents nationwide, but a similar program isn't in place for boosters.

"My sense is that every nursing home is figuring this out on their own," Brian McGarry told *CNN*. He's an assistant professor at the University of Rochester's Department of Medicine whose research focuses on aging. "I have heard anecdotally from some [nursing homes](#) that—like many aspects of the economy and [health care](#)—there is a shortage of pharmacists. They're trying to serve the [general public](#) and don't have the staff to send people out to nursing homes to run in-house clinics."

For her part, Sara Roszak, vice president of health and wellness strategy for the National Association of Chain Drug Stores, said that the focus has shifted to having Americans come to local drug stores to receive

their shots. But she added that there was "flexibility," so nursing home facilities can reach out for help to pharmacies if they want to get boosters into the arms of residents, *CNN* reported.

Compounding concerns are relatively [low rates of vaccination among nursing home staff](#). According to *CNN*, in some states fewer than two-thirds of staff members are fully vaccinated.

"It's very alarming to have unvaccinated staff coming in. The work is very intimate, very up-close and personal, and even with good PPE there's a high risk of exposure there," McGarry told *CNN*. "Vaccines do seem to make a difference."

"Getting those first doses to staff who are still unvaccinated should be at the top of list, and right under that is getting boosters to everyone eligible," McGarry said.

More information: Find out more about getting your COVID-19 booster shot at vaccines.gov.

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