

WHO: COVID boosters should start with most vulnerable

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The World Health Organization says that coronavirus vaccine boosters should now now be offered to people, starting with the most vulnerable, in a move away from its previous insistence that boosters were

unnecessary for healthy adults and an acknowledgment that the vaccine supply is improving globally.

At a press briefing on Friday, the U.N. health agency said it was now recommending booster doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, beginning in the highest-priority groups, about four to six months after receiving the first two doses, in line with guidance from dozens of countries that embarked upon booster programs months ago.

Last year, WHO pleaded with [rich countries](#) to declare a moratorium on offering booster doses until the end of 2021, an appeal that went almost entirely ignored.

The agency said its expert vaccine group assessed the increasing data about booster doses and noted the waning of immune protection over time. Numerous studies have shown in recent months that booster doses restore antibody levels and offer strong protection against [severe disease](#), including against COVID-19 variants like delta and omicron.

"Boosters are part of the vaccination program, but it doesn't mean unfettered use to all ages," said WHO's Dr. Kate O'Brien, director of immunization, vaccines and biologicals. "We continue to have highest focus on vaccination of highest priority groups," she said.

WHO also endorsed the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for children as young as 5, at a reduced dose. Countries including the U.S. and Canada gave the [green light](#) to Pfizer's shot for young children last fall.

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