

# Israeli data shows 2nd COVID booster shields against Omicron

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Israel's government made a second booster dose of the Pfizer vaccine

available to all of its citizens aged 60 and older at the beginning of this year.

Now, emerging [data](#) suggests this fourth dose greatly boosts protection against the [Omicron variant](#).

In a study published April 5 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, researchers looked at data collected on more than 1.25 million Israelis over 60.

All were "eligible for the fourth dose during a period in which the B.1.1.529 [Omicron] variant of SARS-CoV-2 was predominant," explained a team co-led by Yair Goldberg, of the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa.

In terms of sheer case numbers, 177 out of every 100,000 people who got a second booster became infected with COVID-19, compared to 361 cases among those who'd gotten just three doses of vaccine, the study found.

Analyzed another way, within a month of getting their fourth shot, people had half the odds of becoming infected with COVID compared to people in the three-dose group, Goldberg and his colleagues said.

However, they noted that "this protection waned in later weeks."

The benefits were even greater when it came to shielding a person against a [severe case of COVID](#).

Compared to people in the same age group who did not get a fourth Pfizer shot, those who did were more than 3.5 times less likely to develop severe COVID-19 within a month of getting the shot, the researchers reported.

In this case, protection seemed to last, too: "Protection against [severe illness](#) did not wane during the 6 weeks after receipt of the fourth dose," the Israeli group noted.

The new data arrives after last week's [announcement](#) by the Biden Administration that second boosters of COVID vaccines are now available to all Americans over the age of 50 who got their first [booster](#) more than four months ago. People with certain [medical conditions](#) are also eligible.

Dr. Amesh Adalja is senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security in Baltimore. He believes the Israeli data "demonstrates that in high-risk persons such as those above 60 years of age, fourth doses appear beneficial against what matters: [severe disease](#)."

Should everyone try and get a [fourth booster](#)? Maybe not, Adalja said.

"Boosters are best targeted to those who are at risk for severe breakthrough infections and not a one-size-fits-all recommendation for the [general population](#), regardless of risk," he said.

**More information:** Find out more about COVID-19 vaccine boosters at the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Yinon M. Bar-On et al, Protection by a Fourth Dose of BNT162b2 against Omicron in Israel, *New England Journal of Medicine* (2022). [DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa2201570](https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa2201570)

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