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**Headline:** Mix and match: How to pick a booster vaccine

**Blurb:** Do you know which COVID vaccine you're going to pick as your booster dose? Here's a handy guide to the latest research on the mix and match approach.

### Bullets:

- The national health department has dropped the wait time between shots for South African adults and is also allowing people to choose which vaccine they'd like as a booster.
- People who got a Johnson & Johnson jab can return after two months for a booster and those who got Pfizer can line up for a third dose after three months.
- Research shows that taking a different vaccine in round two could offer you even more protection against the virus.

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If you're fully vaccinated against COVID and 18 or older, you're up for a booster dose.

When?

- Three months after two doses of Pfizer
- Two months after one jab of the Johnson and Johnson (J&J) jab

Plus, you can now choose which shot you want to top up with.

Do you know which one you're going to pick?

The health department says [people should try to stick](#) to the brand they originally got vaccinated with.

But, there's also nothing wrong with getting boosted with a different brand of jab than the one you got vaccinated with first.

But the [latest research](#) shows that taking a different vaccine in round two could help your body protect you even better from the virus.

Why is that?

Vaccines work in different ways. They don't all provide the same type of protection at the same level.

For example: J&J is better at giving you long-term protection against falling very ill with COVID.

mRNA vaccines such as Pfizer are best at protecting you from getting infected in the first place.

Combine these jabs, and the benefits you get are multiplied.

The [European Medicines Agency](#) (EMA) is also in favour of mixing vaccines since this option can also take pressure off countries' supply. The EMA is Europe's medicines regulator.

When is the best time to get boosted?

The health department says:

1. Three to six months after your second Pfizer dose
2. Two months after one J&J dose

South Africa halved the waiting period for a Pfizer booster from six months to three months to encourage people to return for their booster doses.

Research shows shorter waiting times between doses can increase uptake a little bit.

But electronic or written reminders are still the best way to get people to return.

*This story was produced by the [Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism](#). Sign up for the [newsletter](#).*