

# EU backs new Omicron vaccines for first jabs

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The EU's drug watchdog on Tuesday said two COVID vaccines targeting new types of the Omicron variant could now be used for people's first vaccinations, and not just for boosters.

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) approved the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines in September and October respectively against the BA.4 and BA.5 types, but only in people who had already had their

initial jabs.

The Amsterdam-based regulator said its emergency task force had now decided the two vaccines "may be used for primary (initial) vaccination. These vaccines are currently only authorised as boosters."

They can be used for both adults and children.

The decision came after it reviewed [lab studies](#) on the [immune response](#) from the so-called "bivalent" vaccines, which target the new Omicron types as well as the original COVID virus that emerged in China in late 2019.

The safety of the boosters was "comparable to that of the original mRNA vaccines", it added.

European nations had been keen to rush through the new generation of jabs so they can start booster campaigns and also target those who have not yet had the [vaccine](#).

While previous "variants of concern" like Alpha and Delta eventually petered out, Omicron and its sub-lineages have dominated throughout 2022.

The BA.4 and BA.5 types have in particular helped to drive a wave of new cases of the disease in Europe and the United States in recent months.

All Omicron variants tend to have a milder disease course as they settle less in the lungs and more in the upper nasal passages, causing symptoms like fever, tiredness and loss of smell.

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