

# U.S. will begin wide distribution of Covid booster shots next month, saying vaccine protection wanes over time

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## KEY POINTS

U.S. agencies are preparing to offer booster shots to all eligible Americans beginning the week of Sept. 20.

It's now "very clear" that immunity starts to fall after the initial two doses, top U.S. health officials said,

### In this article

MRNA **-4.65 (-1.08%)** 

PFE **-0.11 (-0.25%)** 



VIDEO 02:13



   

The United States will begin widely distributing Covid-19 booster shots next month as new data shows that vaccine protection wanes over time, top U.S. health officials announced Wednesday.

It's now "very clear" that immunity starts to fall after the initial two doses, and with the dominance of the delta variant, "we are starting to see evidence of reduced protection against mild and moderate disease," according to the statement signed by CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky, acting FDA Commissioner Dr. Janet Woodcock, White House chief medical advisor Dr. Anthony Fauci and other U.S. health leaders.

"Based on our latest assessment, the current protection against severe disease, hospitalization, and death could diminish in the months ahead, especially among those who are at higher risk or were vaccinated during the earlier phases of the vaccination rollout."

### **CNBC Health & Science**

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[Pfizer says Israel data shows third Covid shot restores protection from infection to 95% as it makes case to FDA for boosters](#)

[Side effects from Covid vaccine boosters are similar to second dose, Pfizer tells FDA](#)

[Rap artist Nicki Minaj faces backlash after tweeting inaccurate information about Covid vaccines](#)

As a result, U.S. agencies are preparing to offer booster shots to all eligible Americans beginning the week of Sept. 20, starting eight months after their second dose of Pfizer or Moderna's vaccines, officials said. While they said recipients of [Johnson & Johnson's](#) single-shot vaccine will likely need boosters, they are awaiting more data in the next few weeks before making a formal recommendation.

"With those data in hand, we will keep the public informed with a timely plan for J&J booster shots as well," the officials said.



In a statement late Wednesday, J&J said: “We are engaging with the U.S. FDA, CDC and other health authorities and will share new data shortly regarding boosting with the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine.”

The statement added: [“In July](#), Johnson & Johnson shared data demonstrating that our single-shot COVID-19 vaccine generated strong, persistent immune activity against the rapidly spreading Delta variant and other highly prevalent SARS-CoV-2 viral variants. [Interim results](#) from a Phase 1/2a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine also showed that the durability of the immune response was strong, with no waning for at least eight months, the length of time that had been evaluated to date.”

Ensuring long-term and durable protection against hospitalization and death are critical in curbing the COVID-19 pandemic.

The plan is subject to a formal recommendation from a CDC vaccine advisory committee and approval from the FDA, also a formality.

The announcement came ahead of a White House Covid press briefing Wednesday, where federal health officials further outlined their plan for boosters.

**VIDEO** 02:48

**Biden: ‘Eight months after your second shot, get a booster shot’**

The booster shot “will boost your immune response,” President Joe Biden said later Wednesday in a speech at the White House. “It will increase your protection from Covid



Biden also addressed criticism from some health advocates who say the U.S. should focus on sending vaccine doses to countries facing shortages, rather than prioritizing booster shots for Americans.

“I disagree,” Biden said. “We can take care of America and help the world at the same time.”

The decision to recommend booster shots comes as the public becomes increasingly concerned about the delta variant and a rise in breakthrough cases — infections in fully vaccinated individuals. It marks a shift from previous comments made by U.S. health officials, who said in recent months that fully vaccinated Americans did not need booster shots at this time.

**VIDEO** 03:22

**U.S. authorizes booster shots for Americans eight months from second dose**

U.S. officials changed their message on boosters in recent days as cases continued to rise. Fauci said Thursday that [everybody will “likely” need a booster shot](#) at some point. On Friday, federal officials approved administering booster shots to Americans with weakened immune systems, which includes cancer and HIV patients and people who have had organ transplants.

National Institutes of Health Director Dr. Francis Collins, who also signed the statement, said Tuesday that new Covid data, including from Israeli health officials, [caused U.S.](#)

Monday showing a reduction in the effectiveness of Pfizer's Covid vaccine against severe illness among people 65 and older who were fully vaccinated in January or February.

The U.S. is beginning to see similar trends in vaccine effectiveness as well, Collins said. He said the rise in breakthrough cases may be due to a combination of the fast-spreading delta variant and Covid vaccine protection waning over time.

The effectiveness of Pfizer's Covid vaccine steadily declines over time, [dropping to about 84%](#) for vaccinated people about four to six months after getting their second dose, according to CEO Albert Bourla. Moderna said its vaccine [remained 93% effective in the first six months](#) after the second dose but expects that protection to fall and boosters will be necessary.

During a press briefing Wednesday, Walensky said officials based their decision on studies that showed immunity from Pfizer and Moderna's vaccines diminished over several months. One study in New York from May 3 through July 25 showed that the vaccine's effectiveness in protection against infection dropped from around 92% to 80%. Another study by the Mayo Clinic showed that Pfizer's vaccine efficacy fell from around 76% to 42% while Moderna's declined from 86% to 76%.

"Right now, it's still as if our vaccine protection is working really well," Collins said. "But we don't want to wait until it's like oh, too late."

The move to recommend boosters is likely to spark criticism, especially as a large portion of the global population has yet to receive even one dose of a Covid vaccine.

Earlier this month, the World Health Organization asked wealthy nations to stop the distribution of booster shots until at least the end of September to give poorer countries the chance to vaccinate their populations with the first rounds of shots. The request is part of WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus' plan to vaccinate 40% of the world by December.

The U.S. released the statement minutes after the WHO condemned wealthy nations that support boosters for the general public.

"We believe clearly that the data to date does not indicate that boosters are needed," Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, the WHO's chief scientist, said during a press briefing. "And we need to know which groups at what period after the vaccination and which particular