

For Immediate Release
Friday, September 17, 2021

For further information, contact: Terri Farneti, Public Health

Coordinator

92

8.442.5596

The FDA will Decide on COVID-19 Booster Shots Later Today...Maybe

Why the Wait? Health and Human Services (HHS) announced a plan in August to begin offering COVID-19 vaccine booster shots this fall, but the CDC's independent advisory committee, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) continues to meet and discuss data on the evolution of the pandemic and the use of COVID-19 vaccines. The shots are being called booster shots to differentiate from the "third" shots recommended for severely immunocompromised individuals.

While breakthrough infections among the fully vaccinated have increased, most of those cases aren't severe. The purpose of vaccines, say booster critics, is to prevent hospitalizations and deaths, not cold-like symptoms. Scientists have argued that booster shots are not needed at this time for the public. While COVID vaccine effectiveness against mild disease may wane over time, protection against severe disease appears to persist. It sets the stage for a tense meeting Friday as the Biden administration has said it wants to begin offering booster shots to the general public as early as next week, pending authorization from the FDA.

The COVID-19 vaccines authorized in the United States continue to be highly effective in reducing risk of severe disease, hospitalization, and death, even against the widely circulating Delta variant. However, COVID-19 constantly evolves. Experts are looking at all available data to understand how well the vaccines are working, including how new variants, like Delta, affect vaccine effectiveness. If FDA authorizes and ACIP recommends it, the goal is for people to start receiving a COVID-19 booster shot this fall.

Pfizer and Moderna each submitted data to the Food and Drug Administration making a case for booster shots: Pfizer's report noted that the two-dose regimen's COVID protection for recipients' wanes over time, dropping below 84% just four months after the second dose. Moderna's report shared a new analysis from its phase three study that showed the incidence of breakthrough COVID cases, which occur in fully vaccinated people, was less frequent in a group of trial participants who were more recently inoculated, suggesting immunity for earlier groups had started to wane.

The CDC recommends that moderately to severely immunocompromised people receive an additional, or third vaccine dose. They include people who have been receiving active cancer treatment for tumors or cancers of the blood, have received an organ transplant and are taking medicine to suppress the immune system. The additional shots for the immunocompromised have been available through pharmacies, doctor's offices, and Spectrum Healthcare since mid-August. YCCHS is not offering third shots currently.

Yavapai County reports 342 COVID-19 Cases and 8 Deaths since Monday. The county has tested 142,000 residents for COVID-19 and there have been **25,174** positive cases and **615** deaths since the beginning of the pandemic. Yavapai Regional Medical Center reports **40** COVID-19 patients, VVMC reports **16**, and the VA has **3** COVID-19 patients. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the COVID-19 virus and to get vaccinated. The vaccines are safe, effective, and free. Appointments can be made through www.yavapaiaz.gov/chs or www.vaccine.gov. If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or what seems to be a bad cold, please get tested for COVID-19. **Testing sites:** <https://yavapaiaz.gov/Portals/39/COVID-19/TestingSitesinYavapaiCounty.pdf>.