

Preventative Measures

Medical experts provide some answers on coronavirus vaccines & benefits, but questions remain

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Image courtesy of Polina Tankilevitch via Pexels Link: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/person-holding-test-tubes-3735747/>

In recent weeks, three major pharmaceutical companies have shared promising vaccine results in the global fight against COVID-19. Drug manufacturers Moderna, Pfizer, and AstraZeneca have shown success rates of 70% or higher in late-stage vaccine trials, which await regulatory approval for distribution to the general population.

These results have caused many to inquire about distribution and potential side effects from the vaccine. For example, must everyone get the vaccine? Who will receive the vaccine first? What must first occur before manufacturers can release the vaccine?

About the FDA and vaccines

In the United States, the **Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** oversees the approval of all vaccines, prescription medicines, and medical devices available to the public. This regulatory body works with manufacturers to evaluate the quality and safety of drugs and whether companies can go forward to test them on people. All devices, preventative treatments, and therapies must undergo [a rigorous testing process](#). This process involves determining immune system responses in patients as well as risks and side effects of these products.

Once the FDA approves a vaccine, it gets distributed to the general population. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention outlines [some benefits](#) of a COVID-19 vaccine.

- Protection from the virus
- Immunity
- Halting the worldwide pandemic

Emergency actions

The impact and prevalence of the coronavirus could cause the FDA to consider an “Emergency Use Authorization” (EUA) to curb the disease’s spread. EUA’s permit the agency to bolster the country’s collective public health against illnesses during public health emergencies such as COVID-19.

During a [recent interview with PBS](#), **Anthony S. Fauci, M.D.** stated Pfizer has filed an EUA with the FDA for its vaccine, which could get released to the public as early as mid-December. Similarly, Moderna has asked both the FDA and its European counterpart, the European Medicines Agency, to allow for emergency approval of its treatment.

“We project that it is very likely that we will have vaccine doses in people’s arms in December. The projection is that there will be 40 million doses for 20 million people,” says Dr. Fauci.

Who gets the vaccines’ first doses?

Dr. Fauci, the nation’s head infectious disease expert on the White House Coronavirus Task Force, also noted in this interview that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) will evaluate who should receive the first vaccine doses. These groups may include frontline medical and essential workers, individuals with underlying medical conditions, and the elderly.

Pfizer’s Senior Vice President of Vaccine Clinical Research and Development Bill Gruber told [Scientific American](#) his company’s vaccine should go first to health care professionals and those at the highest risk for coronavirus.

This raises the question at the top of many people’s minds: when will the majority of the U.S. population receive a vaccine?

Dr. Fauci states that the bulk of Americans not in the aforementioned categories should get it by mid spring to early summer 2021.

A mandatory vaccine?

Although some believe vaccines can cause harm to a person’s long-term health, science does not back this. Others fear the federal government, states, or employers will force its citizens and employees to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Yet this cannot necessarily occur.

Dr. Fauci has noted the U.S. government [cannot require](#) that all residents automatically receive the vaccine. “You don’t want to mandate and try and force anyone to take the vaccine. We’ve never done that. You can mandate for certain groups of people like health workers, but for the general population you cannot.”

States and cities, however, have some authority to mandate vaccines for public health reasons. In an article featured on *Today*, University of California Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco **Professor Dorit Reiss** says such formal orders must be “reasonable, proportional and enforced in a nondiscriminatory fashion.”

According to Reiss, anti-discrimination laws also provide cover for some in the workforce.

“If you can’t get the vaccine for medical reasons, that could be a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act, which would require an employer to accommodate you. That could mean requiring you to wear a mask on the job or have limited contact with other people.”

Next steps

To date, nearly 1.5 million people around the globe have died from COVID-19. This stark number includes nearly 270,000 Americans. Public health experts across the country expect numbers to [continue to rise](#) due to the lack of a coordinated federal response, cooler weather, and people spending more time indoors.

This makes it even more crucial for people to protect themselves against the coronavirus until the majority of the nation receives a vaccine by the middle of next year. They can do this by taking the following actions:

- Practicing social distancing
- Avoiding crowds
- Wearing face masks
- Frequently washing their hands

These sites provide up-to-date news and information about the coronavirus.

[The U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#)

[Associated Press News](#)

[Team Corona Busters](#)