

New drug shows promise in preventing severe COVID

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A single infusion of an experimental drug dramatically lowers levels of coronavirus in the bodies of newly infected patients and cuts their chances of hospitalization, the drug's maker reported Wednesday.

Eli Lilly's announcement did not include detailed data and hasn't been peer-reviewed or published yet, *The New York Times* reported.

The news comes from interim results of a trial sponsored by Eli Lilly and the U.S. National Institutes of Health. NIH officials would not comment on the announcement until they have seen more detailed data from the trial, the *Times* reported.

How does the drug work its magic? It is a monoclonal antibody, a manmade copy of an antibody produced by a patient who recovered from COVID-19, the *Times* reported. Scientists around the world have high hopes that that [monoclonal antibodies](#) will prove to be powerful coronavirus treatments, but they come with a caveat: They are difficult to manufacture, and would take time to produce, the *Times* reported.

In the trial, 452 newly diagnosed COVID patients received the monoclonal antibody or a placebo infusion. Some 1.7 percent of those who got the drug were hospitalized, compared with 6 percent of those who received a placebo— a 72 percent reduction in risk, Eli Lilly said.

At the same time, blood levels of the coronavirus plummeted among those who received the drug, and their symptoms were fewer and milder, the *Times* reported.

This is the first treatment aimed at patients who are not already seriously ill and hospitalized, the newspaper added.

Dr. Myron Cohen, director of the Institute for Global Health and Infectious Diseases at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill,

told the *Times* he was impressed by the findings.

"It's exciting," said Cohen, who was not involved in the study. The trial appears to be rigorous, and the results are "really compelling," he added. Other monoclonal antibody drugs to combat the coronavirus are in development, he noted.

"This is the opening of a door," Cohen said.

Most Americans doubt Trump's vaccine comments

In a sign that Americans are becoming more wary about the safety of a new coronavirus [vaccine](#), a new poll shows a majority of adults don't trust what President Donald Trump has said on vaccine development.

More than half (52%) of adults said they don't trust the president's vaccine comments, the *NBC News*/Survey Monkey poll found, while just 26% say they do. Twenty percent said they were "not aware" whether they trust what the president has said about a vaccine, *NBC News* reported.

Those polled were also more skeptical about whether they or their families would get a government-approved coronavirus vaccine if one became widely available, *NBC News* reported.

The poll's latest data show that just 39% said they would get it, 23% said they wouldn't and 36% say they weren't sure. Just a month ago, 44% of Americans said they would get a government-approved vaccine, 22% said they wouldn't, and 32% said they weren't sure.

The highest level of confidence in a coronavirus vaccine came during the week of Aug. 17 to Aug. 23, when 45% polled said they would get a vaccine.

Despite public hesitancy, President Trump has promised a "safe and effective vaccine this year," and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has advised states to prepare for "large-scale" vaccine distribution by Nov. 1.

Public health experts have questioned that aggressive timeline. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's leading [infectious diseases](#) expert, has said that he feels "cautiously optimistic" that a safe and effective vaccine would be found by the end of the year but that doing so by Nov. 3 was "unlikely," *NBC News* reported.

Vaccine trials continue

Meanwhile, Oxford University announced that final-stage testing of a coronavirus vaccine it is developing with drug maker AstraZeneca will restart following a pause last week after a serious side effect showed up in a volunteer.

"The independent review process has concluded and following the recommendations of both the independent safety review committee and the U.K. regulator... the trials will recommence in the U.K.," the university said in a statement released on Saturday. No further details were given on the results of the review.

Media reports have said the person who had the suspected adverse reaction had been volunteering in a trial based in the United Kingdom. The volunteer was diagnosed with transverse myelitis, an inflammatory syndrome that affects the spinal cord and is often sparked by viral infections.

The AstraZeneca vaccine is considered a frontrunner among the dozens of coronavirus vaccines in various stages of testing around the world, the *Associated Press* reported.

The university said in large trials "it is expected that some participants will become unwell and every case must be carefully evaluated to ensure careful assessment of safety." Globally, some 18,000 people have received its vaccine so far, the *AP* reported.

Two other vaccines are in final testing in the United States, one made by Moderna Inc. and the other by Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech.

On Sunday, Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla said the company should soon know whether its vaccine works, *CBS News* reported.

In an interview with "Face the Nation," Bourla said the Pfizer vaccine trials indicate "we have a good chance that we will know if the product works by the end of October."

The pharmaceutical giant now plans to expand trial enrollment from 30,000 to 44,000, to test the vaccine in more vulnerable populations, *CBS News* reported.

"Right now, the study recruits from 18 to 85. Now we will go to 16 years old," Bourla said. "Also, we will go to people with special conditions, chronic conditions like HIV patients, but also we will try to use it to increase the diversity of the [study] population."

Colleges scramble to contain COVID spread

Just weeks into the fall semester, universities and colleges in all 50 states are struggling to contain the spread of coronavirus on their campuses.

More than 40,000 cases of COVID-19 have been reported among students, staff and faculty nationwide, *CNN* reported. That number is likely higher due to a lag from schools that update their data every few days.

Many outbreaks have cropped up after gatherings at fraternities and sororities: One cluster of COVID-19 cases was traced back to a fraternity party held at the University of New Hampshire. More than 100 people attended the Aug. 29 party and few wore masks, *CNN* reported.

At Indiana University Bloomington, 30 sorority and fraternity houses have been ordered to quarantine following what campus officials have described as an "alarming increase" in COVID-19 cases within the houses, *CNN* reported.

Meanwhile, the University of Wisconsin-Madison has told all undergraduate students they must restrict their movements for the next two weeks, to try to reverse a rise in COVID-19 cases, *CNN* reported. The university also directed nine campus fraternities and sororities with off-campus live-in houses to quarantine for at least 14 days.

"We've reached the point where we need to quickly flatten the curve of infection, or we will lose the opportunity to have campus open to students this semester, which we know many students truly want," Chancellor Rebecca Blank said in a statement.

Some of the highest number of cases are at Miami University, University of South Carolina, Ohio State University and East Carolina University, all of which have over 1,000 confirmed cases, *CNN* reported. The University of Missouri has 862 confirmed cases, while Missouri State University has 791, the *CNN* tally shows.

Cases keep mounting

By Wednesday, the U.S. coronavirus case count passed 6.6 million as the death toll passed 195,600, according to a *New York Times* tally.

According to the same tally, the top five states in coronavirus cases as of

Wednesday were: California with nearly 770,000; Texas with more than 700,000; Florida with nearly 669,000; New York with more than 450,000; and Georgia with over 280,000.

Curbing the spread of the coronavirus in the rest of the world remains challenging.

By Wednesday, India's coronavirus case count had passed 5 million, just one month after hitting the 3 million mark, the *Times* reported.

More than 82,000 coronavirus patients have died in India, but when measured as a proportion of the population, the country has had far fewer deaths than many others. Doctors say this reflects India's younger and leaner population.

India reported 90,123 new cases on Tuesday, and its seven-day daily average of new cases is more than 92,000, the *Times* reported.

The country's public health system is severely strained, and some sick patients cannot find hospital beds, the newspaper said. Only the United States has more coronavirus cases.

Meanwhile, Brazil posted nearly 4.4 million cases and over 133,000 deaths as of Wednesday, the *Times* tally showed.

Cases are also spiking in Russia: The country's [coronavirus](#) case count has passed 1 million, the *Times* reported. As of Wednesday, the death toll in Russia was 18,853.

Worldwide, the number of reported infections passed 29.6 million on Wednesday, with nearly 936,000 deaths, according to the Hopkins tally.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention has more on the [new coronavirus](#).

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