

Biden will ask Americans to wear masks for 100 days

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President-elect Joseph Biden said Thursday that on his first day in office he would ask Americans to wear masks for 100 days, and that Dr. Anthony Fauci will play a pivotal role in his administration's fight to curb the spread of coronavirus.

"On the first day I'm inaugurated, I'm going to ask the public for 100 days to mask. Just 100 days to mask—not forever, just 100 days. And I think we'll see a significant reduction" in the virus, Biden told *CNN*.

As for Fauci, Biden made it clear that the nation's top infectious diseases expert would be a central player in the U.S. coronavirus response, *The New York Times* reported.

"I asked him to stay on in the exact same role he's had for the past several presidents, and I asked him to be a chief medical adviser for me as well, and be part of the COVID team," Biden said.

That response is facing its toughest challenge so far, as daily case counts, hospitalizations and deaths continue to set records on a daily basis.

California, the first state to impose far-reaching lockdowns after the pandemic struck, announced strict new measures on Thursday, to try to keep a surge in cases from overwhelming hospitals, the *Times* reported.

Millions of people across Southern and Central California are likely to see outdoor dining shuttered, playgrounds roped off and hair salons closed within days if the available intensive-care capacity in their areas dips below a 15 percent threshold, the *Times* reported.

The new restrictions will last for at least three weeks, strictly limit store capacity and allow restaurants to serve only takeout or delivery.

"If we don't act now our hospital system will be overwhelmed," Gov.

Gavin Newsom said. "If we don't act now, we'll continue to see our death rate climb."

Other states have also taken stronger actions to slow the spread of coronavirus.

In anticipation of a deadly holiday season, Gov. John Carney of Delaware on Thursday issued a stay-at-home advisory asking people not to gather indoors with anyone outside their household, the *Times* reported. In Michigan, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer recently ordered a three-week shutdown that closed casinos and movie theaters and suspended in-person high school and college classes. Oregon, Washington State, Minnesota and cities from Los Angeles to Philadelphia have also re-imposed restrictions.

Britain First to Approve Emergency Use of Pfizer's COVID vaccine

Britain became the first Western country to allow emergency use of a coronavirus [vaccine](#) on Wednesday, approving Pfizer's candidate in the race to inoculate millions of people around the globe.

Having beat the United States to emergency authorization may pressure American regulators, who are already taking heat for not moving faster to get doses to people, the *Times* reported. And it has stirred up a global debate about how to balance the dire need for a vaccine against the importance of looking for clear signs that a vaccine is safe.

"Help is on its way with this vaccine—and we can now say that with certainty, rather than with all the caveats," British health secretary Matt Hancock said Wednesday.

Though Britain has an early jump on distribution of the Pfizer vaccine, it will have no effect on the distribution of the hundreds of millions of doses that other wealthy countries like the United States have bought in prepaid contracts, the *Times* said.

But there are daunting obstacles to the vaccine's delivery to the masses.

The Pfizer vaccine, developed with BioNTech, a smaller German firm, must be kept at the unspeakably cold temperature of minus 94 degrees Fahrenheit until shortly before shots are given. However, Pfizer said in a statement released Wednesday that it has developed shipping containers that use dry ice to keep the vaccine cold. GPS sensors will allow the company to track each shipment and ensure they stay cold, the company added.

"Pfizer has vast experience and expertise in cold-chain shipping and has an established infrastructure to supply the vaccine worldwide, including distribution hubs that can store vaccine doses for up to six months," the company said.

Still, the temperature requirement could dictate who will be vaccinated first in Britain: While nursing home residents were supposed to be the top priority under an advisory committee's plans, efforts to limit transportation of the vaccine to ensure it remains cold may mean that National Health Service staff will receive the shots first, the *Times* reported. The British government said Wednesday that 800,000 doses would be available by next week for health workers to begin administering.

In the United States, an advisory panel on Tuesday approved a vaccine distribution plan that recommends health care workers and nursing home residents and staff be the first to receive any approved coronavirus vaccine. The recommendation from the Advisory Committee on

Immunization Practice (ACIP), if heeded, will steer the initial short supply of vaccines to about 21 million health care personnel and 3 million Americans working or living in long-term care facilities.

An FDA advisory panel is set to meet on Dec. 10 to decide whether the agency should grant emergency authorization to the Pfizer vaccine, the *Times* reported.

The global race to develop a vaccine is poised to shatter records for time to market. Around the world, researchers are testing 57 vaccines in clinical trials, and nearly 100 others are being tested in animals or cell, the *Times* reported. China and Russia have both approved vaccines without waiting for the results of late-stage trials, which experts say raises safety concerns.

A global scourge

By Friday, the U.S. coronavirus case count passed 14.2 million while the death toll passed 276,000, according to a *Times* tally. According to the same tally, the top five states in coronavirus cases as of Friday were: Texas and California with roughly 1.3 million cases each; Florida with just over 1 million cases; Illinois with more than 761,000; and New York with nearly 679,000.

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

Many European countries are tightening restrictions, the *Associated Press* reported. France has entered a nationwide lockdown, and Germany and Austria have started partial lockdowns as government officials across the continent scramble to slow a sharp rise in infections that threatens to overwhelm their health care systems.

England has followed suit, while Italy, Greece and Kosovo also announced new measures, the *AP* reported.

Things are no better in India, where the coronavirus case count passed 9.5 million on Friday, a Johns Hopkins University tally showed. More than 139,000 coronavirus patients have died in India, according to the Hopkins tally, 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. Still, the country's public health system is severely strained, and some sick patients cannot find hospital beds, the *Times* said. Only the United States has more [coronavirus](#) cases.

Meanwhile, Brazil neared 6.5 million cases and had over 175,000 deaths as of Friday, the Hopkins tally showed.

Worldwide, the number of reported infections passed 65 million on Friday, over 1.5 million deaths recorded, 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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