

Biden predicts all Americans can get COVID vaccine by August

February 17 2021, by Ernie Mundell and Robin Foster



Every American who wants a coronavirus vaccine should be able to get

one by the end of July, President Joe Biden said Tuesday.

His message, delivered during a town hall meeting hosted by *CNN*, was more optimistic than one he delivered last week when he warned that logistical hurdles would most likely mean that many people would still not have been vaccinated by the end of the summer, *The New York Times* reported.

Meanwhile, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, on Tuesday revised his own optimistic estimate from last week, when he predicted the beginning of an "open season" for vaccines by April, the *Times* reported.

"That timeline will probably be prolonged, maybe into mid-to-late May and early June," he said in an interview with *CNN*.

At a time when Americans are keen for life to return to normal, Biden tried on Tuesday night to reassure the public.

While the president said he did not want to "overpromise," he said at one point that "by next Christmas I think we'll be in a very different circumstance, God willing, than we are today." At another point he predicted that by the time the next school year starts in September, the nation would be "significantly better off than we are today," the *Times* reported.

The White House also said Tuesday that states would begin receiving 13.5 million doses each week—a jump of more than 2 million doses.

The increases were welcomed by [state officials](#) desperate to inoculate more vulnerable Americans before more contagious variants of virus become dominant, the *Times* reported.

The Biden administration has been working with Pfizer to get the company more manufacturing supplies through the Defense Production Act, the *Times* reported. The administration announced last week that Pfizer and Moderna, the other maker of a [coronavirus vaccine](#) authorized in the United States, would be able to deliver a total of 400 million doses by the end of May, well ahead of schedule.

The latest boost in supply came partly because Pfizer will now get credit for six doses instead of five per vial, a White House spokesman said, while two-thirds of the boost came from increased output. Officials also now say there is an ample supply of the specialized syringes needed to extract the extra Pfizer dose.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters on Tuesday that with the latest increase, vaccine deliveries had jumped 57 percent since Biden was inaugurated, the *Times* reported.

Winter storm slows US COVID vaccine rollout

Biden's prediction came as winter storms continued to disrupt vaccine distribution. Clinics were closed and shipments were stalled in states where the pace of vaccinations had already lagged behind the national average. Vaccine appointments were rescheduled or canceled from Texas to Kentucky, the *Times* reported.

A spokeswoman for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention told the *Times* that the government was projecting "widespread delays" in vaccine shipments and deliveries in the coming days, because weather was affecting a FedEx facility in Memphis and a UPS facility in Louisville, both vaccine shipping hubs.

"CDC and federal partners are working closely with the jurisdictions, as well as manufacturing and shipping partners, to assess weather

conditions and help mitigate potential delivery delays and cancellations," the spokeswoman said.

The cancellations are just the latest hurdle in the vaccine rollout, which had finally been ramping up in recent weeks. An average of about 1.7 million people have been getting a shot each day, the *Times* reported.

Many of the closures and cancellations have been in the South, where the storm sent temperatures plummeting to record-breaking lows. The storm's impact stretched beyond the South, however. Health officials in Washington State, where the storm has come and gone, said they are dialing down vaccination plans for later this week because they expect delays in delivery of doses, the *Times* reported. And Missouri Gov. Mike Parson said Monday that vaccine distributions run by the state would be canceled for the rest of the week.

"Missouri is experiencing severe winter weather that makes driving dangerous and threatens the health and safety of anyone exposed to the cold," he said in a statement. "These conditions will also likely delay some vaccine shipments. We want to protect the safety of everyone involved in the mass vaccination events, from the patients being vaccinated to the volunteers who generously support these events."

The vaccination delays are likely to grow as the storm continues to move across the country. Power outages have affected millions of people in Texas, Oregon, Virginia, Kentucky and elsewhere, the *Times* reported.

In Alabama, hospitals have closed vaccination clinics, as have more than two dozen county health departments. In New Hampshire, state officials said all Tuesday vaccination appointments would be canceled or rescheduled.

New evidence that British COVID variant could be

more deadly

More evidence has emerged that suggests a coronavirus variant already known to spread faster is also likely to be more deadly.

The B.1.1.7 variant, which is thought to have originated in Britain, is already firmly entrenched in America and could soon become the dominant strain, according to Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Speaking Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation," she said "we know now that, or we estimate now that about 4% of disease in this country is related to B.1.1.7," she said. "And we have projections that it may be the dominant strain by the end of March."

As of Tuesday, there were 1,277 cases of the British variant found in 42 U.S. states, according to the CDC.

Walensky's warning came on the heels of research released by British scientists that shows B.1.1.7 might be more likely to trigger more lethal cases of COVID-19.

"The overall picture is one of something like a 40 to 60 percent increase in hospitalization risk, and risk of death," Neil Ferguson, an epidemiologist and scientific adviser to the British government, told the *Times*.

Vaccines already being distributed in the United States are believed to be effective against B.1.1.7, so Walensky said it's imperative that the massive rollout already underway continues. At the same time, and in the face of other new variants, other steps are underway, she told *CBS*.

Pharmaceutical companies are tweaking their research to fight the

B.1.1.7 variant, she said, and the CDC is monitoring how people who've already gotten the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines are faring.

"But we're not waiting for that," she said. "We're doing the science to scale up different vaccines in case we either need bivalent vaccines, that is a vaccine that has two different strains, or booster vaccines. Both are happening."

As of Wednesday, more than 55.2 million Americans had been vaccinated, with 71.6 million doses distributed. More than 15 million people have gotten their second shot, according to the CDC.

A global scourge

By Wednesday, the U.S. coronavirus case count passed 27.8 million while the death toll neared 488,000, according to a *Times* tally. On Wednesday, the top five states for coronavirus infections were: California with nearly 3.5 million cases; Texas with more than 2.5 million cases; Florida with over 1.8 million cases; New York with more than 1.5 million cases; and Illinois with over 1.1 million cases.

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

In India, the coronavirus case count was more than 10.9 million by Wednesday, a Johns Hopkins University tally showed. Brazil had nearly 10 million cases and nearly 241,000 deaths as of Wednesday, the Hopkins tally showed.

Worldwide, the number of reported infections neared 109.6 million on Wednesday, with more than 2.4 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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