

Pfizer to discuss COVID-19 vaccine booster with US officials

July 12 2021, by Hope Yen



In this May 11, 2021 file photo, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, speaks during a Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions hearing to examine an update from Federal officials on efforts to combat COVID-19, on Capitol Hill in Washington. Fauci said Sunday, July 11 "it is entirely conceivable, maybe likely" that Americans will need a third booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine in the coming months, but it was too soon for the government to recommend that now. Fauci, who is President Joe Biden's chief medical adviser, said the Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration did the right thing last week by pushing back against drugmaker Pfizer's assertion about a booster within 12 months. Credit: Jim Lo Scalzo/Pool via AP, File

Pfizer says it plans to meet with top U.S. health officials Monday to discuss the drugmaker's request for federal authorization of a third dose of its COVID-19 vaccine as President Joe Biden's chief medical adviser acknowledged that "it is entirely conceivable, maybe likely" that booster shots will be needed.

The company said it was scheduled to have the meeting with the Food and Drug Administration and other officials Monday, days after Pfizer asserted that booster shots would be needed within 12 months.

Pfizer's Dr. Mikael Dolsten [told The Associated Press](#) last week that early data from the company's booster study suggests people's antibody levels jump five- to 10-fold after a third dose, compared to their second dose months earlier—evidence it believes supports the need for a booster.

On Sunday, [Dr. Anthony Fauci](#) didn't rule out the possibility but said it was too soon for the government to recommend another shot. He said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the FDA did the right thing last week by pushing back against Pfizer's assertion with their statement that they did not view booster shots as necessary "at this time."

Fauci said clinical studies and laboratory data have yet to fully bear out the need for a booster to the current two-shot Pfizer and Moderna vaccines or the one-shot Johnson & Johnson regimen.

"Right now, given the data and the information we have, we do not need

to give people a third shot," he said. "That doesn't mean we stop there. ... There are studies being done now ongoing as we speak about looking at the feasibility about if and when we should be boosting people."

He said it was quite possible in the coming months "as data evolves" that the government may urge a booster based on such factors as age and underlying medical conditions. "Certainly it is entirely conceivable, maybe likely at some time, we will need a boost," Fauci said.



In this March 2021 photo provided by Pfizer, vials of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine are prepared for packaging at the company's facility in Puurs, Belgium. Pfizer is about to seek U.S. authorization for a third dose of its COVID-19 vaccine, saying Thursday, July 8, 2021, that another shot within 12 months could dramatically boost immunity and maybe help ward off the latest worrisome coronavirus mutant. Credit: Pfizer via AP

Monday's planned meeting between Pfizer and U.S. health officials was first reported by The Washington Post.

Currently only about 48% of the U.S. population is fully vaccinated. Some parts of the country have far lower immunization rates, and in those places the delta variant is surging. Last week, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the CDC director, said that's leading to "two truths"—highly immunized swaths of America are getting back to normal while hospitalizations are rising in other places.

Fauci said it was inexplicable that some Americans are so resistant to getting a vaccine when scientific data show how effective it is in staving off COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations, and he was dismayed by efforts to block making vaccinations more accessible, such as Biden's suggestion of door-to-door outreach.

Gov. Asa Hutchinson, R-Ark., agreed Sunday that there is a vaccine resistance in Southern and rural states like his because "you have that more conservative approach, skepticism about government."

Describing his efforts to boost vaccinations in his state, which is seeing rising infections, Hutchinson said "no one wants an agent knocking on a door," but "we do want those that do not have access otherwise to make sure they know about it."

The grassroots component of the federal vaccination campaign has been in operation since April, when supplies of shots began outpacing demand. It was outlined and funded by Congress in the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill passed in March and overwhelmingly is carried out by local officials and private sector workers and volunteers.

Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., blasted opposition to vaccination efforts from some GOP lawmakers as "absolute insanity." He said House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy of California and others in the party need to speak out against "these absolute clown politicians playing on your vaccine fears for their own selfish gain."

Fauci appeared on CNN's "State of the Union," ABC's "This Week" and CBS' "Face the Nation"; Hutchinson spoke on ABC, and Kinzinger was on CNN.

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Citation: Pfizer to discuss COVID-19 vaccine booster with US officials (2021, July 12) retrieved 23 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-07-pfizer-discuss-vaccine-booster-monday.html>

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