

# Pentagon to make COVID vaccination mandatory for all military personnel

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Following on full U.S. regulatory approval of the Pfizer COVID-19

vaccine, the Pentagon announced on Monday that all military personnel—including 1.3 million active-duty troops—must get their shots.

According to the Associated Press, Department of Defense spokesman John Kirby said Pentagon officials are preparing to issue guidance to require vaccination, although no exact timeline was given.

The Pentagon announcement is of little surprise: Earlier in August, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a memo that he would "seek the president's approval to make the vaccines mandatory no later than mid-September, or immediately upon" licensure by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, "whichever comes first," the AP reported.

Monday's full approval of the two-dose Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine should open the floodgates to more widespread action aimed at getting vaccine-hesitant Americans to line up for their shots.

Besides the Pentagon, the nation's largest school system, in New York City, announced that it would now move to mandate that all education staff be vaccinated, *The New York Times* reported.

The FDA announced its long-awaited decision early Monday.

"The FDA's approval of this vaccine is a milestone as we continue to battle the COVID-19 pandemic," Acting FDA Commissioner Dr. Janet Woodcock said in an agency news release. "While this and other vaccines have met the FDA's rigorous, scientific standards for emergency use authorization, as the first FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccine, the public can be very confident that this vaccine meets the high standards for safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing quality the FDA requires of an approved product."

"While millions of people have already safely received COVID-19 vaccines, we recognize that for some, the FDA approval of a vaccine may now instill additional confidence to get vaccinated," Woodcock added. "Today's milestone puts us one step closer to altering the course of this pandemic in the U.S."

The approval is likely crucial for greater vaccine uptake.

For example, as students prepare to return to college campuses across the country, some, like Indiana University, already require vaccines for students. But others, like the University of Memphis, will likely only pursue a vaccine mandate when coronavirus vaccines gain full federal approval, the *Times* reported.

Speaking to CNN on Sunday, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy said he thought full FDA approval would definitely have a significant impact on millions of Americans who remain vaccine-hesitant.

"This may tip them over toward getting vaccinated," he said, adding that he expected companies, governors and schools to use the full FDA approval to impose vaccine mandates. "We already know that there are many businesses and universities that have moved toward vaccine requirements."

About 60% of eligible people in the United States are now fully vaccinated, according to figures from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Three in 10 unvaccinated adults said they would be more likely to get vaccinated if one of the vaccines currently authorized for emergency use were to receive full approval from the FDA, according to a June poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

For the 45 percent of unvaccinated Americans who have steadfastly said they will not get the vaccine, full approval will likely prompt new restrictions, including limitations on employment and an increase in health insurance premiums, the *Times* reported.

Some states and municipalities could follow the lead of New York City, which will soon require at least one vaccine dose for those seeking to enter indoor restaurants, gyms or cultural events.

The FDA updated its authorizations of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines last week to allow third "booster" doses for some immunocompromised people, a decision backed by the CDC.

Regulators are still reviewing Moderna's application for full approval for its [vaccine](#), and a decision could come at least several weeks after the one for Pfizer. Moderna is planning to submit its data in support of a booster shot in September, the *Times* reported.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [COVID-19](#).

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