

White House says 50% of Americans fully vaccinated against COVID

August 6 2021



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Half of the US population is now fully vaccinated against COVID-19, the White House said Friday, as inoculations rise in response to the surging Delta variant of the coronavirus.

"50% of Americans (all ages) are now fully vaccinated. Keep going!" Cyrus Shahpar, the White House's COVID-19 data director, tweeted.

That means more than 165 million people have received either the two-dose Moderna or Pfizer vaccine, or the one-and-done Johnson & Johnson shot.

The threshold of half of all adult Americans fully vaccinated was reached in late May.

President Joe Biden has been pressing hard for Americans to get vaccinated ever since he took office in January but has faced stubborn resistance, especially in conservative parts of the country, with inoculations dropping off sharply in April.

The aggressive vaccination program had raised hopes of a return to some semblance of normal life this summer, but the plan was hindered by the Delta variant.

In an increasingly assertive approach, the Biden administration has asked all federal employees to get vaccinated or face COVID testing twice a week.

Biden hinted Friday there would be further measures, saying, "There will be more to come in the days ahead."

White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said there were "early conversations, early discussions about a range of options."

One possibility mentioned in press reports is pressuring nursing homes—a hotbed of deaths early in the pandemic—to force vaccinations among staff or risk losing public funding.

Cities including New York and Los Angeles are imposing new restrictions, such as demanding proof of vaccination for entering indoor venues including restaurants and gyms.

The seven-day average of newly vaccinated people is up 11 percent from last week, and up 44 percent over the past two weeks, Shahpar said.

Daily new cases, deaths and hospitalizations have risen sharply in recent weeks. Last week, there was an average of 90,000 new coronavirus cases per day, with Florida and Texas accounting for a third of them, the White House said.

The United States is back up to around 380 COVID-19 deaths a day, with hospitalizations averaging 7,300 a day over a week.

The level of community transmission of the virus is "high" or "substantial" in 85 percent of the country, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says.

The United States is the nation hardest-hit by the pandemic, with 615,000 deaths.

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