

Biden doubles US purchase of Pfizer COVID therapeutic pills

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This scanning electron microscope image shows SARS-CoV-2 (yellow)—also known as 2019-nCoV, the virus that causes COVID-19—isolated from a patient, emerging from the surface of cells (blue/pink) cultured in the lab. Credit: NIAID-RML

President Joe Biden announced Tuesday a doubling of US government

purchases of new Pfizer therapeutic pills designed to combat the worst effects of COVID-19.

At a meeting with his White House pandemic response team, Biden said the new order will take the stockpile to 20 million from 10 million pills.

"These pills are going to dramatically decrease hospitalizations and deaths," he said. "We already placed the largest order in the world. Now I'm doubling that order."

The FDA regulatory body granted emergency use authorization on December 22 for Pfizer's Paxlovid tablets.

The initial government purchase of 10 million antiviral treatments, which are aimed at those facing a high-risk from COVID-19, cost \$5.3 billion.

The United States, like other countries around the world, is seeing a huge surge in infections from the COVID Omicron variant. So far, also in keeping with data internationally, the strain seems mostly only to cause serious illness in those who have not been vaccinated.

"This continues to be a pandemic of the unvaccinated," Biden said.

"Be concerned about Omicron but don't be alarmed," he added. However, "if you're unvaccinated... some will die, needlessly die."

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