

Biden administration to offer 2nd COVID boosters to those 50 and older

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Despite not knowing how long another jab might provide protection, the

Biden administration plans to offer a second COVID booster shot to Americans 50 and older.

Optional second [boosters](#) of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines could be authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as soon as this week, people familiar with the plan say, and that would be followed by advice from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *The New York Times* reported.

While a second [booster](#) for older adults will be offered, [federal health officials](#) will not go so far as to recommend it, and no meetings of the advisory committees of either the FDA or the CDC are planned ahead of the decision on second boosters.

Some federal health officials strongly support second boosters, while others are skeptical, but they came to the decision to offer the shots in case infections surge again before the fall, the *Times* reported. Officials also said that people of all ages, including anyone who gets a booster this spring, should get another shot in the fall.

If a major wave of COVID-19 surfaces in the next few months, a second booster dose for older Americans could save thousands of lives and prevent tens of thousands of hospitalizations.

But if there is no significant surge until the fall, second boosters could waste vaccine doses, increase vaccine fatigue and raise questions about the federal government's strategy, according to the *Times*.

Another surge of coronavirus cases in Europe is being driven by the highly contagious [Omicron](#) subvariant BA.2. It's now responsible for just over a [third of cases](#) in the United States, but federal health officials have said they don't expect it to fuel a large jump in cases.

To date, 1 in 75 Americans aged 65 or older has died of COVID-19, accounting for three-fourths of U.S. deaths from the virus, CDC data show. More than 33 million (over two-thirds) of people in that age group have a first booster and would be eligible for a second, the *Times* said.

Opinions about second boosters for [older adults](#) vary in the wider scientific community.

"I am not persuaded there is substantial waning of protection against [severe disease](#) after the third dose," Dr. Philip Krause, a former senior regulator at the FDA, told the *Times*.

But while healthy younger people with one booster are protected at the moment, [older people](#) "should probably start receiving fourth shots now," Dr. Monica Gandhi, an infectious disease doctor and medical professor at the University of California, San Francisco, told the newspaper.

The fact that officials will approve, but not recommend, a second booster could frustrate the public, according to Dr. Judith Aberg, chief of the division of infectious diseases at Mount Sinai Health System in New York City.

Approving a second booster without meetings of the FDA and CDC advisory panels—as happened with the [first boosters](#) — could draw criticism, another expert suggested.

"This is a complex decision that involves a pretty deep dive, and I think it would really benefit from public discussion," Dr. Jesse Goodman, a former chief scientist at the FDA, told the *Times*. "I would not want to see an advisory committee skipped on this."

While no advisory panel meetings on second boosters are planned, the

FDA has scheduled a meeting of its advisory committee on April 6 to discuss the administration's overall future vaccine strategy.

More information: Visit the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for more on [boosters](#).

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