

Fauci: US in 'a different moment' but pandemic not over

April 27 2022, by Lauran Neergaard



Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and chief medical adviser to the president, speaks during a Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee hearing Tuesday, Jan. 11, 2022 on Capitol Hill in Washington. Speaking Tuesday night, April 26, 2022, on PBS' "NewsHour," Fauci said the global pandemic isn't over but the U.S. currently is "out of the pandemic phase." But it doesn't mean the coronavirus threat to Americans has ended. Credit: Greg Nash/Pool via AP

Dr. Anthony Fauci said Wednesday the coronavirus is under better control in the United States. but the pandemic isn't over—and the challenge is how to keep improving the situation.

"We are in a different moment of the pandemic," said Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, in an interview with The Associated Press.

After a brutal winter surge, "we've now decelerated and transitioned into more of a controlled phase," he said. "By no means does that mean the pandemic is over."

His comments came a day after he said on the PBS "NewsHour" that the U.S. was "out of the pandemic phase" and also told The Washington Post that the country was finally "out of the full-blown explosive pandemic phase."

Fauci's remarks reflect how health authorities are wrestling with the next stage of the pandemic—how to keep COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations manageable and learn to live with what's still a mutating and unpredictable virus.

Fauci said the U.S. appears to be out of what he called the "fulminant phase" of the pandemic, huge variant surges that at their worst sparked hundreds of thousands of infections daily, along with tens of thousands of hospitalizations and thousands of deaths.

COVID-19 cases are at a lower point than they've been in months and two-thirds of the U.S. population is vaccinated. Nearly half of those who need a booster dose have gotten the extra shot, and effective treatments are available.

"We are much, much better off than we were a year ago," he said.

Still, there have been lulls before, and while cases are low, they are increasing in many parts of the country. Vaccination rates worldwide are far lower, especially in developing countries.

To keep improving, Fauci ticked off a to-do list: Get more people fully vaccinated; develop even better vaccines; figure out the best booster strategy to counter variants; and make sure people can access treatment as soon as they need it.

"We can't take our foot off the pedal," Fauci said. "There's a lot of viral dynamics throughout the world and we still may get another variant which could lead to another potential surge."

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