

# FDA panel meets to craft future vaccine strategy

April 6 2022, by Robert Preidt and Robin Foster

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An advisory panel to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration will meet

Wednesday to discuss the best way forward with coronavirus vaccines, as evidence grows that variants are eroding the power of the country's current shots.

"As we prepare for future needs to address COVID-19, prevention in the form of vaccines remains our [best defense](#) against the disease and any potentially severe consequences," Dr. Peter Marks, director of the FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, said in a [news release](#) announcing the panel meeting last month.

"Now is the time to discuss the need for future boosters as we aim to move forward safely, with COVID-19 becoming a virus like others such as influenza that we prepare for, protect against and treat," Marks added. "Bringing together our panel of expert scientific external advisors in an open, transparent discussion about booster vaccination is an important step to gain insight, input and expert advice as we begin to formulate the best regulatory strategy to address COVID-19 and virus variants going forward."

During the meeting, the panel will [hear](#) from a wide range of experts, including those from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the FDA's Office of Vaccine Research, the U.S. National Institutes of Health and the World Health Organization.

Panel members will also hear from Sharon Alroy-Preis, director of public health services for Israel's Health Ministry, who will describe [recent research](#) on Israel's experience with giving a second booster shot for those 60 and older earlier this year.

No official vote is planned, and no specific vaccine products will be discussed, *CNN* reported.

Many scientists believe that existing vaccines need to be reconfigured to

deal with the new coronavirus as it evolves. Federal officials want to determine how to do that before a possible fall resurgence of the virus, and the panel has been asked to help guide that strategy, *The New York Times* reported.

Last week, the FDA [authorized](#) a second booster for people 50 and older, and CDC director Dr. Rochelle Walensky recommended those boosters for people 65 and older, along with those ages 50 to 64 with serious health conditions.

For now, "there are two issues that are going on" when it comes to the future of COVID booster shots, Dr. Anthony Fauci, chief medical adviser to President Joe Biden, told *CNN* last week.

There is what the future might look like for adults aged 50 and older, who can now get a second booster shot of a COVID vaccine.

"Will my getting a vaccine now somehow interfere with the effectiveness if I need a boost in the fall?" Fauci asked. "It could possibly be that if the protection starts to wane, those of us in a certain category age-wise or [with an] underlying condition might actually require that additional boost, and getting it now for the elderly individual should not impede at all the feasibility of your getting it as we enter into the fall."

The second issue involves trying to decide what the future might look like for the general public on how often [booster](#) shots could be needed.

For Fauci, the key question remains unanswered: "Will it [circulating virus levels] ultimately get to such a low level that we might not even need a boost every year?" he asked.

One expert thinks [booster shots](#) will probably be necessary going

forward.

"We likely will need some form of periodic vaccination. Now, whether that's annual or every two years or every five years, we don't really know that yet. I think that that will emerge as we gather more data," Dr. Archana Chatterjee, dean of the Chicago Medical School at Rosalind Franklin University and a member of the FDA's [vaccine advisory panel](#), told *CNN* in March.

"But I do anticipate that this will be required on a periodic basis to keep it under control," said Chatterjee, who stressed that her comments do not reflect the opinions of the committee or the FDA.

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

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