

Officials: Millions of COVID-19 shots ordered for youngest

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Prepared Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine syringes for children ages 5 to 11 and adults are displayed on a table at Northwest Community Church in Chicago, Dec. 11, 2021. The Biden administration said Thursday, June 2, 2022, that children under 5 may be able to get their first COVID-19 vaccination doses as soon as June 21, if federal regulators authorize shots for the age group, as expected. Credit: AP Photo/Nam Y. Huh, File

Millions of COVID-19 vaccine doses have been ordered for small children in anticipation of possible federal authorization next week, White House officials say.

The government allowed pharmacies and states to start placing orders last week, with 5 million doses initially available—half of them shots made by [Pfizer](#) and the other half the vaccine produced by Moderna, senior administration officials said.

As of this week, about 1.45 million of the 2.5 million Pfizer doses have been ordered, and about 850,000 Moderna shots have been ordered, officials said. More orders are expected in the coming days.

Young children are the only group of Americans not yet eligible to get COVID-19 vaccinations. Up to about 20 million U.S. children under 5 would become eligible for vaccination if the government authorizes one or both shots.

More than 30,000 U.S. children younger than 5 have been hospitalized with COVID-19 and nearly 500 coronavirus deaths have been reported in that age group, said Dr. Vivek Murthy, the U.S. surgeon general.

"We have waited a long time for this moment," White House COVID-19 coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha said at a briefing Thursday.

But it's not clear how popular the shots will be. A recent survey suggests only 1 in 5 parents of young children would get their kids vaccinated right away.

And public health officials have been disappointed at how many older U.S. children, who have been eligible for shots for months, have yet to be vaccinated: Less than one-third of kids ages 5 to 11 have gotten the two recommended doses, according to government figures.

"As we go down in the age groups, we see lower and lower uptake" of vaccines, said Dr. Lucia Abascal of the California Department of Public Health.

Pfizer has asked FDA to authorize three doses of its COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 6 month to 4 years. Each dose is one-tenth of the amount adults receive.

Moderna has asked FDA to authorize two shots for kids ages 6 months to 5 years, each containing a quarter of the dose given to adults.

The Food and Drug Administration authorizes the use of vaccines, while the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issues recommendations to doctors and the public about using them.

An FDA advisory committee is scheduled to meet Tuesday and Wednesday to review data from the two companies. Officials say they expect a FDA decision shortly after that meeting.

A CDC advisory committee is scheduled for next Friday and Saturday, with a CDC decision expected soon after.

If all those entities give their OKs, vaccinations should begin in earnest [as early as June 21](#), Jha said.

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