

## 4.4 million Americans have gotten updated COVID boosters

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At least 4.4 million Americans have received the updated COVID-19

booster shot.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention posted [the count](#) Thursday as [public health experts](#) decried President Joe Biden's televised claim that "the pandemic is over."

The White House estimates that more than 5 million people have actually received the reformulated [booster](#), accounting for lags in state reporting, according to the *Associated Press*.

Public health officials expect demand for the new booster to surge in the next few weeks.

"We've been thinking and talking about this as an annual vaccine like the [flu vaccine](#)," said White House COVID-19 coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha. "Flu vaccine season picks up in late September and early October. We're just getting our [education campaign](#) going. So we expect to see, despite the fact that this was a strong start, we actually expect this to ramp up stronger."

While some Americans rolled up their sleeves as soon as the new boosters were available, others are waiting because they recently had COVID or received a booster in later summer. That's in line with public health advice.

Others may be timing shots to be closer to holiday gatherings and winter months.

Still others may be hoping to choose the [Moderna](#) booster over the [Pfizer](#) shot. [Both companies](#) created bivalent vaccines that target both the original COVID strain and recent [Omicron variants BA.4 and BA.5](#).

Some pharmacies canceled appointments for Moderna boosters due to a

temporary shortage while government regulators finished inspecting and approving batches of the vaccine, *AP* noted.

"If we start to see a large uptick in cases, I think we're going to see a lot of people getting the [new COVID] vaccine," said Dr. David Dowdy, an infectious disease epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore.

The U.S. has ordered 171 million doses of the new boosters for Americans, the *AP* reported. It's too early to say whether demand will match that.

Earlier boosters did not have the uptake public health experts hoped to see.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the president's chief medical adviser, told a panel of biodefense experts that he's concerned that half of vaccinated Americans have never gotten a booster.

"We have a vulnerability in our population that will continue to have us in a mode of potential disruption of our social order," he said. "I think that we have to do better as a nation."

But some Americans were more than eager for the updated vaccine, interviews with the *Associated Press* revealed.

"Give me all the science you can," said Jeff Westling, 30, a Washington, D.C., attorney, who got both the COVID booster and a flu shot on Tuesday, one in each arm. He participates in the combat sport jujitsu, and wants to protect himself from infections that may come with close contact. "I have no issue trusting folks whose job it is to look at the evidence," he told the *AP*.

Jeanie Murphy, 69, of Shawnee, Kan., plans to get the new booster after having minor surgery. The retired hospital chaplain said she sees high interest among her neighbors on the Nextdoor app.

"There's quite a bit of discussion happening among people who are ready to make appointments," Murphy said. "I found that encouraging. For every one naysayer, there will be 10 or 12 people who jump in and say, 'You're crazy. You just need to go get the shot.'"

New York City photographer Vivienne Gucwa, 44, got her new booster already, even though she had received the two initial Moderna shots and no other booster. Gucwa has had COVID twice, once before vaccines were available and again in May.

"When I saw the new booster was able to tackle Omicron variant, I thought, 'I'm doing that,'" Gucwa said. "I don't want to deal with Omicron again. I was kind of thrilled to see the boosters were updated."

Mixed messaging may be adding to confusion, the *AP* reported.

On CBS' "60 Minutes" Sunday, [Biden](#) made comments about the pandemic that have been widely repeated on social media.

"We still have a problem with COVID. We're still doing a lot of work on it. But the pandemic is over," Biden said. "If you notice, no one's wearing masks. Everybody seems to be in pretty good shape. And so I think it's changing."

Biden later backpedaled, saying that the pandemic is "not where it was."

Josh Michaud, associate director of global health policy with the Kaiser Family Foundation in Washington, D.C., told the *AP* the president's comment is adding to the public confusion. He said people aren't sure

when the time is right to get boosted or even where to find out.

"Any time you have mixed messages, it's detrimental to the public health effort," Michaud said. "Having the mixed messages from the president's remarks makes that job that much harder."

University of South Florida epidemiologist Jason Salemi fears Biden's comments may stall prevention efforts.

"That soundbite is there for a while now, and it's going to spread like wildfire. And it's going to give the impression that 'Oh, there's nothing more we need to do,'" Salemi said.

"If we're happy with 400 or 500 people dying every single day from COVID, there's a problem with that," he said. "We can absolutely do better because most of those deaths, if not all of them, are absolutely preventable with the tools that we have."

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [COVID-19 boosters](#).

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