Pfizer cuts earnings outlook on lower COVID-19 drug sales

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The US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer sharply scaled back its earnings outlook for the year, blaming lower-than-expected sales of two drugs used to treat COVID-19, the company said Friday.

It now "anticipates full-year 2023 revenues to be in the range of $58.0 to $61.0 billion, versus its previous guidance range of $67.0 to $70.0 billion," Pfizer announced in a statement.

Earnings per share—the benchmark for the markets—should come in at between 1.45 and 1.65 dollars, compared with 3.25 to 3.45 dollars previously anticipated.

The cut to Pfizer's guidance was "solely due to its COVID products," the company said.

"Full-year 2023 revenues for Paxlovid and Comirnaty are expected to be approximately $12.5 billion, a decline of $9.0 billion versus original expectations," it added.

The sharp revision to expected sales of Paxlovid, an oral antiviral drug, and the COVID-19 vaccine Comirnaty sent Pfizer's stock tumbling.

The company's shares were more than three percent lower in after hours trading at 5:30pm local time in New York (2130 GMT).

After a late summer surge, COVID-19 rates have since come down sharply.

Test positivity rates, hospitalizations and deaths due to the virus are all down over the last week, according to CDC data.

In the statement, Pfizer's chief executive, Albert Bourla, insisted that the company's non-COVID product portfolio is still on track for robust growth this year.

"Pfizer's non-COVID product portfolio remains strong, and we continue to expect these products to achieve year-over-year operational revenue growth in the range of 6% to 8% in 2023," he said.