

# U.S. government to pay Moderna \$176 million to develop mRNA flu vaccine

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U.S. health officials announced Tuesday that the federal government will pay Moderna \$176 million to speed development of a pandemic flu vaccine based on mRNA technology.

Such a [vaccine](#) could be used to treat [bird flu](#) in people, as concern grows about H5N1 cases spreading in [dairy cows](#) across the country, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) noted.

"We have successfully taken lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic and used them to better prepare for future public health crises. As part of that, we continue to develop new vaccines and other tools to help address influenza and bolster our pandemic response capabilities," HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra said in a news release announcing the investment. "The Biden-Harris Administration won't stop until we have everything we need to prepare for pandemics and other public health emergencies that impact the American public."

Moderna already has a bird flu vaccine in early-stage testing that uses the same mRNA technology that allowed a rapid rollout of COVID vaccines, the Associated Press reported.

Some of the new HHS funds will go toward a late-stage trial next year if early results with Moderna's mRNA-based flu vaccine are positive.

"The award made today is part of our longstanding commitment to strengthen our preparedness for [pandemic influenza](#)," Dawn O'Connell, assistant secretary for preparedness and response, said in the HHS news release. "Adding this technology to our pandemic flu toolkit enhances our ability to be nimble and quick against the circulating strains and their potential variants."

The vaccine development could also quickly target another form of influenza if a threat other than the H5N1 form of bird flu emerges, HHS officials stressed.

The award was made through the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), a program that focuses on medical

treatments for potential pandemics.

The H5N1 virus was detected earlier this year in dairy cows and has spread to more than 135 herds in 12 states and has infected three people to date, all with mild cases.

In a bit of good news about bird flu, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration released results of a preliminary [study](#) last week that found flash pasteurization kills virtually all bird flu virus in milk.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [flu vaccines](#).

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