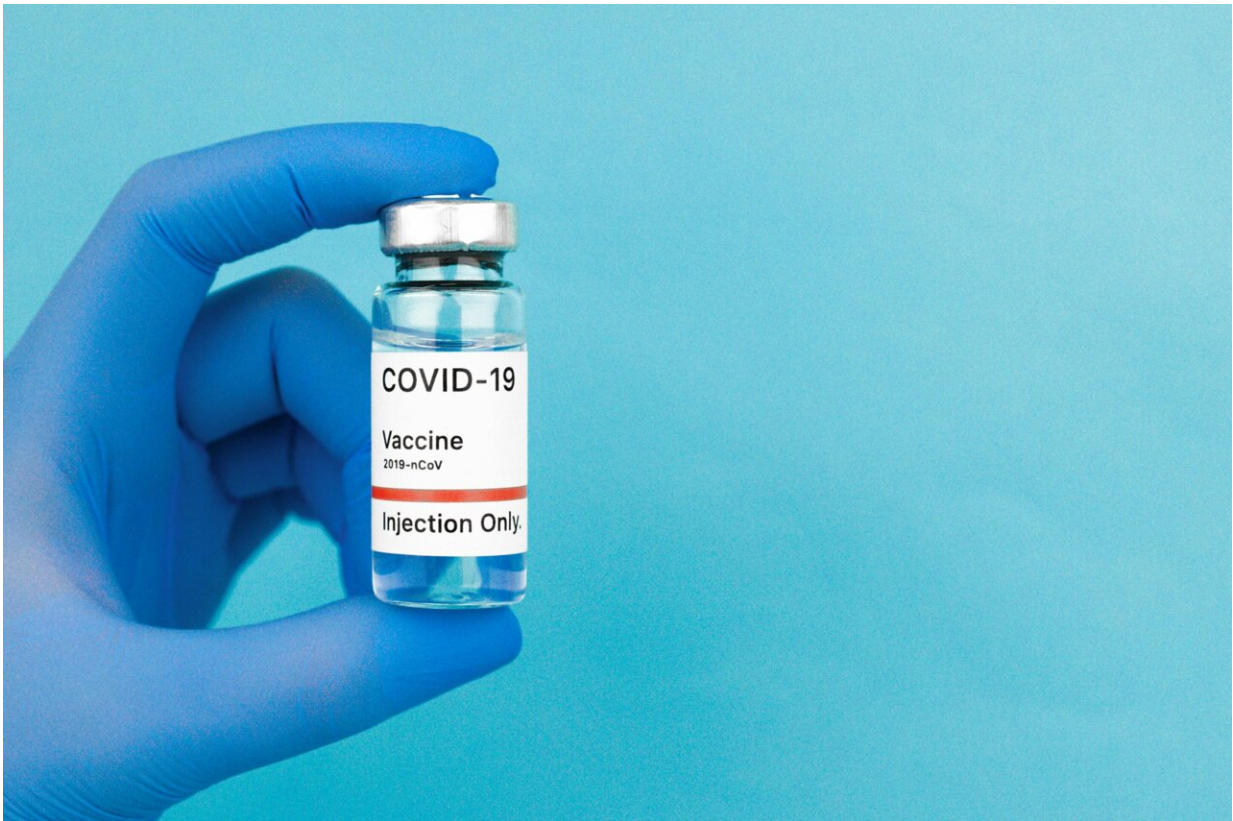


CDC and local experts anticipate new fall COVID vaccines in September

August 21 2024, by Henry Savage, The Philadelphia Inquirer



Credit: Maksim Goncharenok from Pexels

As COVID-19 settles into a permanent presence in our lives, annual vaccinations are becoming the norm.

Earlier this month, an official from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) declared COVID-19 "endemic," indicating that the virus is here to stay. As of the Aug. 13 update, COVID-19 cases are on the rise in 25 states, according to the CDC's latest report.

On Aug. 10, the percentage of positive COVID cases in the U.S. reached its highest level since January 2022. However, the number of people dying of COVID in the United States are currently in the low hundreds compared to January and February 2022, when more than 10,000 people were dying of COVID every week

COVID is still the 10th-highest cause of death in the U.S., down from third in March 2020, as the pandemic was starting.

Paul Offit, an internationally recognized pediatrician specializing in [infectious diseases](#), said these low number of deaths despite high percentage of positive cases is the goal with vaccination.

"The goal of this vaccine is to keep people out of the hospital, out of the [intensive care unit](#), and out of the morgue," said Offit, who is director of the Vaccine Education Center at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

"Because [antibody responses](#) are relatively short-lived, four to six months, it's possible you're going to get COVID again. Most people you know have probably had COVID more than once, but they're still alive because of vaccines and immunological memory."

This year, the CDC advised [vaccine manufacturers](#) to develop vaccines that target the KP.2 strain of COVID-19, a subvariant of JN.1-lineage strains, including KP.3.1.1, KP.3, and KP.2 variants, which are now responsible for most infections in the U.S., according to the CDC.

KP.3.1.1 is now the predominant COVID-19 variant.

When will fall COVID-19 vaccines be available?

Typically updated vaccines are approved and made available by September each year, Offit said.

mRNA vaccines, such as those from Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech, have a three-month production timeline that necessitates that manufacturers and the CDC meet in June each year to have vaccines produced by the fall. The Novavax vaccine takes longer to produce.

"In theory, both the mRNA and Novavax vaccine should be available shortly," Offit said. "The FDA is likely sitting down this week and next week deciding whether they're going to authorize the use of these vaccines."

Who should get updated COVID-19 vaccines in 2024?

Once the vaccines are approved by the Food and Drug Administration, the CDC recommends that everyone 6 months and older receive the updated 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine, including those who have previously been vaccinated.

Current COVID-19 guidelines

Many of the CDC guidelines people got used to years ago are no longer in place. The CDC now generally recommends staying up-to-date on vaccinations, staying home when sick, and seeking health care if you are at risk for severe illness.

Prevention of COVID-19:

1. Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines.

2. Practice good hygiene and cleanliness practices.
3. Supplying indoor spaces with cleaner and fresher air.

Treatment of COVID-19:

When you're sick:

1. Stay home and away from others if you have [respiratory symptoms](#) (fever, chills, fatigue, cough, [runny nose](#), and headache, among others).
2. Get tested for COVID-19.
3. Seek health care if you have risk factors for [severe illness](#), like obesity, diabetes, heart and respiratory conditions

When you can go back to normal activities:

1. Your symptoms are getting better and you have not had a fever (and are not using fever-reducing medication) for at least 24 hours.
2. Wear a mask, physically distance yourselves from others, and test for COVID-19 during the first five days when returning from sickness. People can still spread the virus even if they are feeling better.

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