



AP Illustration/Peter Hamlin

## Will children be able to get COVID-19 vaccines?

By The Associated Press

Will children be able to get COVID-19 vaccines?

Not until there's enough data from studies in different age groups, which will stretch well into 2021.

The Pfizer vaccine authorized in the U.S. in December is for people age 16 and older. Testing began in October in children as young as 12 years old and is expected to take several more months. The Food and Drug Administration will have to decide when there's enough data to allow emergency use in this age group.

Depending on the results, younger children may be enrolled for study as well.

Moderna, which became the second COVID-19 vaccine greenlit in the U.S., began enrolling study participants between ages 12 and 17 in December, and will track them for a year. Testing in children younger than 12 is expected to start in early 2021.

It is uncertain if the results on younger children will come in time for vaccinations to begin before the next school year.

Positive outcomes in adult studies are reassuring and suggest it is safe to proceed in testing kids, said Dr. Buddy Creech, a pediatric infectious disease specialist at Vanderbilt University and director of its vaccine research program.

Even though children usually don't get very sick from COVID-19, they can spread the virus to others, said Dr. Robert Frenck, who is the lead researcher for Pfizer's study in kids at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. At least 1.6 million youth have been infected, 8,000+ have been hospitalized, and more than 160 have died from the virus, he noted.

"It's really important, not only for themselves but also for society," Frenck said.

## Chinese drugmaker says vaccine is 79.3% effective in final tests

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Jin said "it would be helpful" to know how many people were vaccinated, how large the control group was and other details. "They should release more information," Jin said.

Another developer, Sinovac Biotech Ltd., also signed an agreement to build a production facility in Beijing for a coronavirus vaccine with a planned annual capacity of 1 billion doses, the *Beijing Youth News* newspaper reported.

Sinopharm, or China National Pharmaceutical Group, has applied for approval of the Beijing Institute's vaccine following the third and final stage of testing, the company said.

It would be the second vaccine from a Sinopharm unit, following a separate candidate developed by the company's Wuhan Institute of Biological Products Ltd.

The Beijing Institute's vaccine has been approved by the United Arab Emirates. Regulators there say it was 86% effective.

The vaccine relies on two doses, the Beijing Institute said, similar to western-developed vaccines. It gave no information about side effects or conditions required to transport and use the vaccine.

Western-developed vaccines must be kept frozen at temperatures as low as minus 70° Celsius (minus 94° Fahrenheit). Chinese developers say theirs can be stored at 2° C to 8° C (36° F to 46° F).

# Will COVID-19 vaccines work on the new coronavirus variant?

By The Associated Press

Will COVID-19 vaccines work on the new coronavirus variant?

Experts believe so, but they're working to confirm it.

The coronavirus variant in the United Kingdom has caused alarm because of the possibility that it might spread more easily. But even if that turns out to be true, experts say the COVID-19 vaccines being rolled out will likely still work on the variant.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious disease expert, said data coming from Britain indicates the vaccines still will block the virus. But the U.S. also will do tests to be sure.

Viruses often undergo small changes as they reproduce and move through a population. In fact, the slight modifications are how scientists track the spread of a virus from one place to another.

But if a virus mutates significantly enough, one worry is that current vaccines might no longer offer as much protection. And although that's a possibility to watch for



AP Illustration/Peter Hamlin

## Can I stop wearing a mask after getting a COVID-19 vaccine?

By The Associated Press

Can I stop wearing a mask after getting a COVID-19 vaccine?

No. For a couple reasons, masks and social distancing will still be recommended for some time after people are vaccinated.

To start, the first coronavirus vaccines require two shots; Pfizer's second dose comes three weeks after the first and Moderna's comes after four weeks. And the effect of vaccinations generally aren't immediate.

People are expected to get some level of protection within a couple of

weeks after the first shot. But full protection may not happen until a couple weeks after the second shot.

It's also not yet known whether the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines protect people from infection entirely, or just from symptoms. That means vaccinated people might still be able to get infected and pass the virus on, although it would likely be at a much lower rate, said Deborah Fuller, a vaccine expert at the University of Washington.

And even once vaccine supplies start ramping up, getting hundreds of millions shots into people's arms is

expected to take months.

Fuller also noted vaccine testing is just starting in children, who won't be able to get shots until study data indicates they're safe and effective for them as well.

Moncef Slaoui, head of the U.S. vaccine development effort, has estimated the country could maybe reach herd immunity as early as May, based on the effectiveness of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. That's assuming there are no problems meeting manufacturers' supply estimates, and enough people step forward to be vaccinated.

## Can employers make COVID-19 vaccination mandatory?

By The Associated Press

Can employers make COVID-19 vaccination mandatory?

Yes, with some exceptions.

Experts say employers can require employees to take safety measures, including vaccination. That doesn't necessarily mean you would get fired if you refuse, but you might need to sign a waiver or agree to work under specific conditions to limit any risk you might pose to yourself or others.

"Employers generally have wide scope" to make rules for the

workplace, said Dorit Reiss, a law professor who specializes in vaccine policies at the University of California Hastings College of the Law. "It's their business."

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has allowed companies to mandate the flu and other vaccines, and has also indicated they can require COVID-19 vaccines.

There are exceptions; for example, people can request exemptions for medical or religious reasons.

And even though employers can

require vaccinations, there are reasons they might not want to.

Tracking compliance with mandatory vaccination would be an administrative burden, said Michelle S. Strowhiro, an employment adviser and lawyer at McDermott Will & Emery. Employers would also have to manage exemption requests — not to mention legal claims that might arise.

As a result, many employers will likely strongly encourage vaccination without requiring it, Strowhiro said.

### Why social gatherings increase your risk for COVID-19

**What you think the risk looks like**

**What the risk actually looks like**

For more information visit [healthoregon.org/coronavirus](http://healthoregon.org/coronavirus) or call 211

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Wu reported from Taipei, Taiwan.