

# US buys 200M more doses of Pfizer vaccine, option for ‘updated version’

By Will Feuer

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The federal government has bought an additional 200 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine that are expected to be delivered from October 2021 through April 2022, the companies announced Friday.

That brings the total number of doses of the two-shot vaccine purchased by the US to 500 million, the companies said.

The companies said they expect to deliver 110 million of the doses by the end of 2021, with the remaining 90 million doses to be delivered no later than April 30, 2022.

The US has now exercised its option to buy 500 million of the 600 million doses of Pfizer’s vaccine that were secured through an agreement announced last year by the Trump administration.

“Vaccines have been and will remain critical to protecting lives against this devastating disease,” Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla said in a statement. “These additional doses will help the U.S. government ensure broad vaccine access into next year.”

Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech also said Friday that the US “has the option to acquire an updated version of the vaccine to address potential variants as well as new formulations of the vaccine, if available and authorized.”

The companies **announced earlier this month** that they’re working on a booster shot for the vaccine that would target the highly transmissible Delta variant that’s sent new cases surging in largely unvaccinated pockets of the country and world.



The new buy brings the total number of doses of the two-shot vaccine purchased by the US to 500 million.

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US health officials have so far not said a booster shot will be necessary, but Food and Drug Administration officials held a meeting last week with representatives of Pfizer to discuss booster shots.

Israeli officials have **warned in recent weeks** that the Pfizer vaccine is “significantly less” effective against the **Delta variant** of the coronavirus, the strain first seen in India that now accounts for 31 percent of cases in the US.

“We do not know exactly to what degree the vaccine helps, but it is significantly less,” Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said on Sunday.

The shot is still keeping people from getting seriously ill in Israel, where over 60 percent of the population has received a jab. Just 1.6 percent have become critically ill, compared with 4 percent in the pre-vax wave of cases.

But the warnings from Israel have stoked concern that a booster shot of either the same vaccine or an updated formula may be necessary.

 Dr. Michelle Chester draws the Covid-19 vaccine into a syringe at Long Island Jewish Medical Center, on December 14, 2020 in the Queens borough of New York. - The rollout of the Pfizer and BioNTech vaccine, the first to be approved by the Food and Drug Administration, ushers in the biggest vaccination effort in US history. More than 299,000 Americans have been killed by the virus, including over 35,000 residents of New York state.

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Companies are currently working on a booster shot for the COVID-19 vaccine.

POOL/AFP via Getty Images

Pfizer and BioNTech noted in their announcement Friday that the latest purchase is separate from an agreement announced last month for Pfizer and BioNTech to provide 500 million doses to the US to help vaccinate people in some of the world’s poorest countries.

The vaccine received an emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration last year, and it’s now available for those 12 and older in the US.

More than 189 million doses of the vaccine have so far been administered in the US, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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