

# UNMASK THE FACTS

August 16-22

August 18, 2021

## The White House announces plans for COVID-19 booster shots pending ACIP and FDA review

US health authorities announced a plan last week to begin offering booster shots of mRNA vaccines sometime this fall. However, the plan will not go into effect until the FDA and CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) review the safety and efficacy of these boosters. They anticipate that the booster should be administered 8 months after the second dose, but no official recommendations have been made yet.

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## mRNA vaccines still effective against COVID-19 hospitalizations

A recent study released by the CDC suggests that mRNA vaccines remain effective against hospitalization from COVID-19 for at least six months. Among 1,129 patients who received 2 doses of an mRNA vaccine, vaccine effectiveness was measured at 86% 2-12 weeks after vaccination. This number dropped only slightly between 13-24 weeks, moving from 86% to 84%. Vaccine effectiveness was sustained among groups at risk for severe COVID-19.

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## HHS might soon require COVID-19 vaccination for long-term care workers in nursing homes

The HHS is developing new regulations that will require nursing homes to mandate COVID-19 vaccines for workers who serve Medicare and Medicaid enrollees. Some states and jurisdictions have already taken similar steps to protect nursing home residents. These regulations would apply to nearly 15,000 nursing home facilities, which employ 1.6 million workers and serve 1.3 million nursing home residents.

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## US states are running out of ICU beds due to COVID-19 hospitalizations

Alabama, Georgia, Atlanta, Florida, Mississippi, Texas, and Kentucky have almost no intensive care beds left, as COVID-19 hospitalizations soar. Alabama reported on Wednesday more ICU patients than beds available. According to data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, almost 78% of beds in U.S. hospital intensive care units are in use, and one-third of adult ICU patients have the coronavirus.

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## CDC asks travelers at high risk of severe COVID-19 to avoid cruise ships

The CDC recently updated their guidelines for those wishing to travel on cruise ships. The agency now recommends that people who are at increased risk for severe illness due to COVID-19 avoid cruise ship travel, regardless of vaccination status. This advice applies to all cruises from local rivers cruises to international cruises. The agency also recommends that people who are not fully vaccinated avoid travel on cruises altogether.

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