

Retired doctors, nurses will be approved to give COVID vaccine, White House says

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The team also went over other strategies being implemented to increase vaccination rates across the United States, including:

- Planning the launch of 100 community vaccination centers across the country during February.
- Arranging to supply vaccines directly to pharmacies.
- Standing up mobile vaccination clinics to reach under-served communities.
- Speeding up the production of low-dead-space syringes that can squeeze an extra sixth dose out of Pfizer vaccine vials.

Retired doctors and nurses are being called to the front lines of the U.S. coronavirus vaccination effort, the White House COVID-19 Response team announced Wednesday.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is amending its rules to allow retired health professionals to administer COVID-19 [vaccine](#) shots, said Jeff Zients, the White House COVID-19 Response coordinator.

The rules, drafted under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act, will also be adapted to allow licensed doctors, nurses and health practitioners to administer shots across state lines, Zients said.

"We need to increase the number of places where people can get vaccinated, and also at the same time increase the number of vaccinators," Zients said. "This action by HHS today will help get more vaccinators in the field."

"I want to level with the public. We are facing two constraining factors," said Andrew Slavitt, senior advisor to the White House COVID-19 Response team. "The first is getting enough supply quickly enough, and the second is the ability to administer the vaccines quickly once they're produced and sent out to the sites," he explained.

"We are taking action to increase supply and increase capacity, but even so it will be months before everyone who wants a vaccine will be able to get one," Slavitt noted.

The Biden administration has committed to a 16% increase in vaccine supply flowing to states every week for the next three weeks, at a minimum of 10 million doses per week, Slavitt said.

The United States needs well over 500 million doses of vaccine to provide a two-dose regimen for every American over age 16, Slavitt said.

Slavitt emphasized that the plans discussed Wednesday do not take into account vaccines from Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca that have not yet been approved in the United States.

"We are not counting on things that are not in existence today," Slavitt said. "Our plan will be to

make sure that we prepare for as many contingencies as exist."

The good news is that the two COVID-19 vaccines now on the market still appear capable of heading off illness from the new mutant variants of [coronavirus](#) that have been surfacing, said Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and President Joe Biden's chief medical advisor.

The United Kingdom variant has a "very slight, if at all, impact on vaccine-induced antibodies," Fauci said.

The South African variant, which has yet to be spotted on American soil, is a "bit more problematic" because it appears to respond less well to the vaccine, Fauci said.

"However, and this is an important however, it still is well within the cushion of protection," Fauci said. "You could diminish the vaccine-induced antibody efficacy by a few-fold and still be within the protective range of the vaccine."

The United States is on track to meet Biden's promise to deliver 100 million shots of vaccine during the first 100 days of his administration, said Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

More than 23.5 million doses have already been administered, and 3.4 million Americans already have received their second dose, Walensky said.

During the past week, COVID-19 vaccinations increased to 1.6 million doses per day, she added.

Although infection, hospitalization and death rates have recently trended downward, the United States had its deadliest day of the pandemic on Jan. 20, when 4,383 people died of COVID-19, Walensky said.

Based on the current trajectory, the United States will see between 479,000 and 514,000 COVID-19 deaths by Feb. 20, she noted.

Walensky emphasized that the vaccine is safe, with

recent data indicating 2.1 cases of anaphylactic shock per million doses for the Moderna vaccine and 6.2 cases per million for the Pfizer vaccine.

By comparison, 16,500 Americans will die for every one million diagnosed with COVID-19, Walensky said.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Prevention and Control has more about [COVID-19](#).

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