

FDA approves COVID vaccine as Delta variant spreads

Pfizer also seeks approval for booster shots.

BASIC

The Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, is a government group that makes sure food and medicines are safe. Recently, the FDA announced that it had fully approved the Pfizer vaccine, one of the COVID-19 vaccines. The FDA spent a long time studying the science behind the vaccines to make sure they were safe for people to take. **Have you or anyone you know gotten one of the vaccines?** Now that the vaccine has been fully approved, some businesses and organizations have said they will make all employees get the vaccine. The U.S. Defense Department,

GENERAL

The Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, is a government agency that oversees food and medicine safety in the U.S. Recently, the FDA announced it had fully approved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. Last year, the FDA gave two vaccines emergency use authorization. This authorization allowed Americans to start receiving the vaccines earlier this year. These vaccines went through a lot of testing before they were authorized for use. But the FDA wanted to do more testing before giving full approval. The FDA hopes the new approval will encourage more Americans to get vaccinated. **What can you tell about the vaccination rate from the graph here? Do you think more people will get vaccinated now? Why or why not?**

Now that the vaccine has been fully approved, some companies and groups will

ADVANCED

On August 23rd, the Federal Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, announced that it had fully approved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. In December of last year, the FDA gave both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines emergency use authorization. This allowed public health groups to begin vaccinating people in early 2021. Both vaccines went through vigorous testing before being approved for emergency use. But the FDA needed to do more testing before granting full approval. The FDA hopes that the approval will encourage more people to get vaccinated. **Why do you think the approval process took so long?** (*The FDA looks at hundreds of thousands of pages of data, while inspecting how vaccines are made. They also needed to study the long-term effects of the vaccines.*) **What can you tell about the current**

another government group, has already said they will have a vaccine mandate. A

mandate is a command to act a certain way. **Do you think businesses should be able to make people who work for them get vaccinated? Why or why not?** Some schools around the country are making all their teachers get vaccinated as well. **Can someone read the quote here? What is President Biden saying?** NEXT

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begin requiring employees to be vaccinated. For example, the U.S. Defense Department has announced a vaccine mandate for its employees. A mandate is a command to act in a certain way on a public issue. Some school districts will also require their teachers to be vaccinated. **Do you think your school district should have a vaccine mandate? Why or why not?**

Pfizer also recently asked the FDA to approve booster vaccinations. Booster shots are additional vaccines that would help boost immunity against COVID. **What does immunity mean here?** (*The ability to resist a particular disease.*) Experts say booster shots could help defend against the more contagious Delta variant of the COVID virus. **Can someone read the quote? Why do you think so many people are hesitant to get vaccinated?** NEXT

vaccination rate from the graph here?

Now that the vaccine has been approved, some organizations may require employees to be vaccinated. The U.S. Defense Department, for example, has announced a vaccine mandate. **What does mandate mean?** (*A command to act in a certain way on a public issue.*) And New York City announced that it would require all public-school teachers to be vaccinated. **Should businesses and government agencies require vaccinations? Why or why not?**

Pfizer is now asking the FDA to approve a booster shot for those who have already been vaccinated, as the immune response lessens over time. Boosters could help improve immunity against the more contagious Delta variant. **Can someone read the quote here? Do you think more people will get vaccinated now?** NEXT

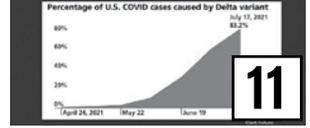
FDA approves COVID vaccine as Delta variant spreads (cont'd)

The Delta variant has caused a surge in COVID cases.

BASIC This summer, a new version of the COVID-19 virus began spreading around the world. This virus is called the Delta variant. As viruses spread, they sometimes change and act differently. This change is called a mutation. Experts say the Delta variant is easier to catch than the original virus. The Delta variant is as easy to catch as chickenpox. Because the Delta variant is so easy to catch, the number of people who have caught COVID has gone up in the last few months. States in the south, like Florida and Mississippi, have seen a big spike in case numbers.

To help stop the spread of the Delta variant, some states, cities, and schools are bringing back their mask mandates. The Centers for Disease Control, or CDC, recently announced even people who have been vaccinated should keep wearing masks inside. **Does your city or school have a mask mandate? How do you feel about it?** END

Mask mandates return as Delta variant spreads.



GENERAL During the summer, the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus caused case numbers around the country to rise. The Delta variant is a mutation of the COVID-19 virus. As viruses spread, they sometimes mutate, or change, in ways that can make them more dangerous. The Delta variant is more contagious than the original virus. It was first found in India last December. But since then, the new virus has spread around the world. It is currently the most common type of COVID caught in the U.S. **From the graph, what percent of COVID cases were caused by the Delta variant in mid-July?** (83.2%.)

was responsible for about 20 percent of all cases in the U.S. **Why do you think things were so bad there?** Experts think cases will begin to start going down in the South soon. But surges are expected in the Midwest in September and October.

In late July, the Centers for Disease Control, or CDC, changed its suggestions about wearing masks. Earlier this year, the CDC said vaccinated people could gather indoors without masks. But due to rising case numbers, the organization has suggested vaccinated people continue to wear masks indoors. Some states and cities around the country have created new mask mandates in response. Many schools are requiring students to wear masks when they return this fall as well. **Has your town or city started a new mask mandate? How do you feel about it?** END

ADVANCED Last year, scientists identified a new strain of the COVID-19 virus in India. This strain is a mutation of the COVID-19 virus called the Delta variant. As viruses spread, they sometimes change, or mutate. **What is a mutation?** (A change in the DNA structure of a cell.) In the case of COVID-19, these mutations have made the virus more contagious. Since the Delta variant was discovered, it has spread across the world and is now the dominant strain of COVID in the U.S. **From the graph, what percent of COVID cases were caused by the Delta variant in mid-July?** (83.2%.)

for 20 percent of all U.S. cases. **Why do you think these states were hit so hard?** Experts believe case numbers will soon begin to decrease in the South, but they expect new surges in Midwest states in September and October. **What do you think could be done to prevent additional surges?**

In response to the spreading variant, the Centers for Disease Control, or CDC, recently updated its mask recommendation. Earlier this year, the CDC said vaccinated people could gather indoors without masks, but now the agency has recommended that even vaccinated people continue to wear masks inside. Many states and cities around the country have reinstated their previously mask mandates. **Does your city require wearing masks inside? Do you agree with this policy? Why or why not?** END

Over the summer, the Delta variant spread rapidly across the southern U.S. States like Florida and Mississippi experienced case numbers as high as when COVID-19 first arrived in the U.S. At one point, Florida alone was responsible