

# Rollout of Booster Shots to Begin in September

By Allen Smith, J.D.

August 18, 2021

**A**s more employers consider making COVID-19 vaccinations mandatory, they'll need to decide if they will also mandate booster shots. Nursing homes will have added incentive to make vaccinations mandatory for their staff, as they could lose Medicare and Medicaid funding if they don't, according to CNN (<https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/18/politics/nursing-homes-federal-funding/index.html>).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and leading government health officials announced Aug. 18 that people who received the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are advised to get a booster shot to improve their immunity to COVID-19. The booster shots should be received eight months after individuals got their second vaccine and are scheduled to become available in September.

"Based on our latest assessment, the current protection against severe disease, hospitalization and death could diminish in the months ahead, especially among those who are at higher risk or were vaccinated during the earlier phases of the vaccination rollout. For that reason, we conclude that a booster shot will be needed to maximize vaccine-induced protection and prolong its durability," wrote the health officials, including U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Acting Commissioner Dr. Janet Woodcock.

"Employers need to prepare now for what will be an entirely new dimension to the complex decisions they face regarding protecting their workers and customers," said Aaron Goldstein, an attorney with Dorsey & Whitney in Seattle.

The availability of booster shots raises several tough questions for employers navigating these issues, he said. "Will employees who were vaccinated over eight months ago continue to count as vaccinated for purposes of state and local rules and orders requiring certain employees to be vaccinated or to socially distance? How will employees react to a requirement that they receive yet another shot? Will vaccinated employees be able to request medical or religious accommodations if they have already been vaccinated?"

Goldstein predicted that employees will have to receive a booster to count as vaccinated.

"Employers should be prepared for this change," he said.

The health officials said they anticipate that people who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine will also need a booster, with timing still to be determined.

We've gathered articles on the news from *SHRM Online* and other trusted news outlets.

[See *SHRM's COVID-19 Vaccination Resources* ([https://c.shrm.org/dc/Bblvn7IUvEnneGOj\\_JtenS7F1f5KTqyTa7QWQxXvDf1q-](https://c.shrm.org/dc/Bblvn7IUvEnneGOj_JtenS7F1f5KTqyTa7QWQxXvDf1q-MrXfwu9S0dID4H6NaHOTik1JiCE6PJkoLfAUyEV-X9M5J-rE19NMCOW57-viGQoSXsTW5jmwE9vR7aNa9i51zZsmxD6GQUt2PSXqm8NBU2j6aKT3r4JTUStvGvv53zya9jO47j2ekHfJzTCWMMnUDGs15d4NPzaE2ZpPx)

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### COVID-19 Vaccination Resources

([www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-news/Pages/COVID-19-Vaccination-Resources.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-news/Pages/COVID-19-Vaccination-Resources.aspx))

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 FXivjQukU9ycrwxmGqdGIJc3dQv4hXT-z5Y2wLI6CWU9sUM=) *for more information on vaccinations and the workplace.]*

### Booster Shots Expected to Be Available Soon

The booster-shot plan for the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines would go into effect from the week of Sept. 20, subject to the FDA conducting an independent evaluation of the safety and effectiveness of a third dose. The U.S. goal is to administer 100 million booster shots in the coming months.

(NPR (<https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2021/08/18/1028798003/covid-19-booster-shots-roll-out-september-moderna-pfizer>))

### Prioritization of Booster Shots

The first booster shots probably will go to nursing home residents, health care workers and emergency workers. They likely would be followed by other older individuals, then by the general population. More than 90 million people in the U.S. have been fully vaccinated with the Pfizer vaccine and 64 million with the Moderna vaccine. Approximately 40 percent of the U.S. population has not gotten a first dose.

(*The New York Times* (<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/16/us/politics/booster-shots.html>))

### Vaccines Are 'Remarkably Effective'

The COVID-19 vaccines are "remarkably effective in reducing risks of severe diseases, hospitalization and death, even against the widely circulating delta variant," the health officials said, though protection begins to decrease over time. Last week, the FDA authorized booster shots for some people who are immunocompromised and the CDC almost immediately recommended giving those doses.

(CNN (<https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/18/health/white-house-covid-boosters/index.html>))

### Disney, Walmart, More Companies Require COVID-19 Vaccination

In response to the surge in COVID-19 cases fueled by the delta variant, more companies, including Disney and Walmart, are requiring workers to get vaccinated. On July 30, The Walt Disney Co. gave its U.S.-based salaried and nonunion, hourly employees 60 days to get vaccinated against the coronavirus. Walmart will require employees at its headquarters in Bentonville, Ark., and certain employees who travel in the U.S. to get vaccinated by Oct. 4, unless an exception applies.

(*SHRM Online* ([www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/legal-and-compliance/employment-law/pages/disney-walmart-more-companies-require-covid-19-vaccination.aspx?\\_ga=2.180304492.977836131.1629119800-1102745045.1615925853](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/legal-and-compliance/employment-law/pages/disney-walmart-more-companies-require-covid-19-vaccination.aspx?_ga=2.180304492.977836131.1629119800-1102745045.1615925853)))

### More States and Cities Require Workers to Get COVID-19 Vaccines

The recent spike in COVID-19 cases has prompted more states and cities to require certain workers in health care and other high-risk settings to get vaccinated against the coronavirus or follow stringent safety requirements.

(SHRM Online ([www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/legal-and-compliance/state-and-local-updates/pages/more-states-and-cities-require-workers-to-get-covid-19-vaccines.aspx?\\_ga=2.41899626.977836131.1629119800-1102745045.1615925853](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/legal-and-compliance/state-and-local-updates/pages/more-states-and-cities-require-workers-to-get-covid-19-vaccines.aspx?_ga=2.41899626.977836131.1629119800-1102745045.1615925853)))

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