

HEALTH

FDA Authorizes First COVID-19 Shots for Infants & Preschoolers

The FDA authorized the first COVID-19 shots for infants and preschoolers. The authorization followed its advisory panel’s unanimous recommendation for the shots from **Moderna and Pfizer**. This means about 18 million children under five are eligible for the shots.

The final step is for the CDC to recommend how to use the vaccines. The CDC’s independent advisers will make their recommendations on Saturday. CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky stated a final signoff would happen soon. During a Senate hearing last week, Walensky stated her staff would work over the Juneteenth holiday weekend “because we understand the urgency of this for American parents.”

Unfortunately, Walensky noted that the pediatric deaths from COVID-19 are higher than what is seen from the flu. “So I actually think we need to protect young children, as well as protect everyone with the vaccine and especially protect elders,” she said.

**Vaccine Preparations for Children**

In addition, the FDA authorized Moderna’s vaccines for school children and teens, and the CDC’s review is this week. Pfizer shots were only an option for those age groups. The Biden Admin-

istration has prepared for the rollout of vaccines for small children. States, tribes, community health centers, and pharmacies have preordered millions of doses. Now, manufacturers will ship vaccines nationwide with the FDA’s emergency authorization. Shots begin next week.

Parents across the country have put off social gatherings for their tots to keep them safe. “Today is a day of huge relief for parents and families across America,” President Joe Biden said in a statement.

**Minor Side Effects For Infants and Preschoolers**

Generally, young children don’t get as sick from COVID-19 as older children and adults. However, their hospitalizations surged during the Omicron wave, and FDA’s advisers determined that the benefits from vaccination outweighed the minimal risks. Moderna and Pfizer showed minimal side effects, including fever and fatigue.

“As we have seen with older age groups, we expect that the vaccines for younger children will protect from the most severe outcomes of COVID-19, such as hospitalization and death,” FDA Commissioner Robert Califf said in a statement.



According to the FDA, when testing more minor children, they developed high levels of virus-fighting antibodies in comparison to what was seen in young adults. Moderna’s vaccine was about 40% to 50% effective at preventing infections. “Both of these vaccines have been authorized with science and safety at the forefront of our minds,” Dr. Peter Marks,

FDA’s vaccine chief, said at a news briefing.

Dr. Marks wants parents to feel comfortable with the vaccine and advise that their children be vaccinated as soon as possible. This can help aid against worse symptoms if a new variant emerges. (Source: BlackHealthMatters June 22 2022)

Menstrual Products Shortage Is Latest Nightmare In America



Another day, another shortage in the U.S. Unfortunately, supply chain issues and inflation have affected all consumer goods. However, the current menstrual products shortage is the latest nightmare

in America. Top retailers and manufacturers acknowledged the shortages this week after videos of women struggling to find tampons on social media.

“I haven’t seen any products in stores for months,” one user posted on Reddit. “I’ve been ordering my tampons on Amazon and getting price gouged.” Sadly, the price of tampons has skyrocketed by nearly 10%. An Amazon spokesperson denied rumors of price gouging. They claimed Amazon “helps ensure sellers are pricing their products competitively” and that the company actively monitors pricing and removes offers that violate its fair pricing policy.

The shortage gained national attention after an article in Time called out the

shortage of menstrual products, something “no one is talking about.”

**Why Is There A Shortage of Menstrual Products**

The latest shortages stem from supply chain constraints around critical materials like cotton and plastic. The same materials are used in personal protective equipment and have been in high demand since the pandemic’s start. Furthermore, the war in Ukraine has further strained the supply. Russia and Ukraine are both major exporters of the fertilizer used to grow cotton. Additionally, the drought in Texas hasn’t helped.

Shortages of raw materials and supply chain issues aren’t new. The U.S. is currently experiencing a shortage of baby

formula. But just like parents cannot wait for formula, neither can people who menstruate.

“Getting raw and packed materials to the places we need to get them to continues to be costly and highly volatile,” said Andre Schulten, Procter & Gamble’s chief financial officer, on a recent earnings call. P&G blamed the shortage on the increased demand sparked by an ad launch in July 2020.

“We understand it is frustrating for consumers when they can’t find what they need,” the P&G spokesperson said in an email. “We can assure you this is a temporary situation.”(Source: BlackHealthMatters -BHM-June 2022)

Actions to Take at the Beach to Protect You, Your Family and Others

**–Talk with the Lifeguard**

You have arrived at the beach and the water looks inviting, but before you enter the water, ask yourself, is the water safe? Before jumping in make sure you are aware of the water’s conditions. Know before you go into the water. Talk to the lifeguard or beach patrol, no one will know the current water conditions better than they will. They are trained to detect dangerous currents and waves and know other water conditions, such as the water temperature. This information could save your life. Annually, rip currents claim the lives of more than 100 people.

**+Know where the Life Ring or Floatation Device Stations are located**

**–Always swim with one or more buddies and make sure the person on shore has a cell phone**

According to the United States Lifesaving Association (USLA), many drownings involve single swimmers. When you swim with a buddy, if one of you has a problem, the other may be able to help, which includes signaling for assistance from others. At least have someone onshore watching you so if an emergency does happen they can for call help. [www.usla.org](http://www.usla.org)

In case of an emergency, where the lifeguard is not present, call 911. If you go to the beach with at least four people, two can be in the ocean swimming, one on the

beach watching, and one available to take lifesaving actions while the other continues to spot the location of those caught in the rip current.

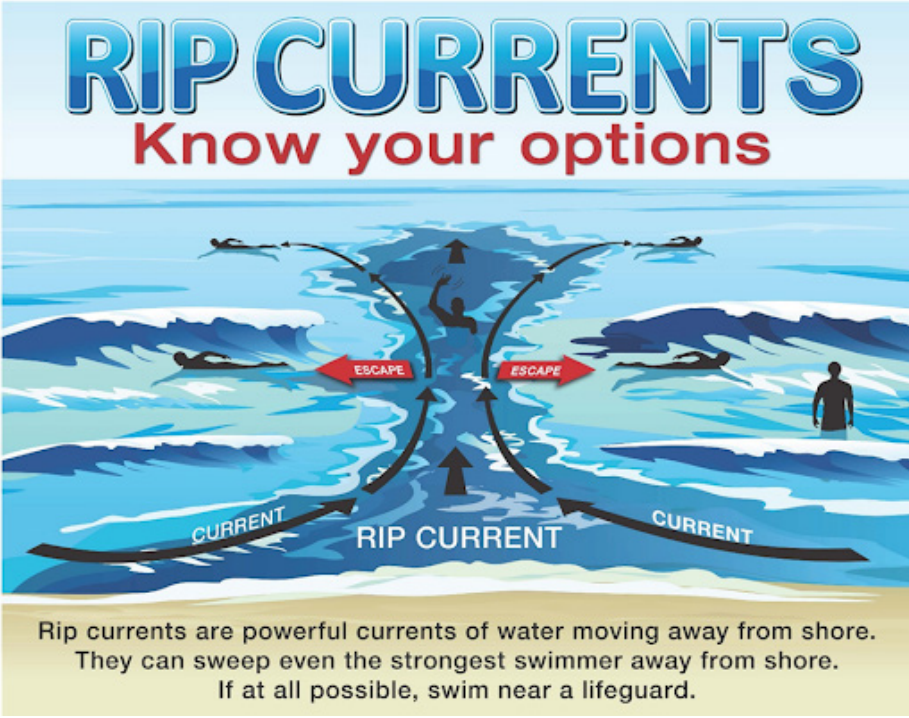
**–Actions you can take once you and your children are in the water**

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A trip to the beach should be fun. Unfortunately, many people are injured or killed each year along our nation’s beaches by dangerous waves and currents.

The National Weather Service (NWS) can help ensure you leave the beach with good memories. NWS provides you with the information you need to stay safe on beaches and in coastal areas and surf zones. A surf zone is defined



as the area of water between the beach/shore and the first line of breaking waves.

When you visit the beach, you need to know about the hazards you may face. Staying aware and alert is what will help to keep you safe in the dynamic conditions found on every beach.

Before entering the water, talk with

a lifeguard or beach patrol. No one will know the current water conditions better than they will.

Whenever possible, swim at beaches with lifeguards. The chances of drowning at a beach with lifeguards are 1 in 18 million. (U.S. Lifesaving Association)

Should You Get a Covid-19 Booster Shot Now or Wait Until Fall? Two Immunologists Help Weigh the Options

*By Prakash Nagarkatti, Professor of Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology, University of South Carolina and Mitzi Nagarkatti, Professor of Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology, University of South Carolina*

Clinical studies show that mixing and matching booster vaccines can lead to a more robust immune response. SDI Productions/E+ via Getty Images

While COVID-19 vaccines continue to be highly effective at preventing hospitalization and death, it has become clear that the protection offered by the current vaccines wanes over time. This necessitates the use of booster shots that are safe and effective in enhancing the immune response against the virus and extending protection.

But when to get a first or second booster, and which shot to choose, are open questions. Many people find themselves unsure whether to wait on new, updated formulations of the COVID-19 vaccines or to mix and match combinations of the original vaccine strains.

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, uses its knob-shaped spike protein to gain entry into cells and to cause infection. Each of the existing and upcoming vaccines relies on emulating the spike protein to trigger the immune

response. However, each vaccine type presents the spike protein to the immune system in different ways.

As immunologists studying inflammatory and infectious diseases, including COVID-19, we are interested in understanding how the COVID-19 vaccine designs differ in the type of immunity they trigger and the protection that results.

New bivalent vaccines

Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech, the two companies whose mRNA vaccines have been the primary options for COVID-19 vaccination across all age groups, both have new vaccine formulations on the way. An advisory committee of the Food and Drug Administration is set to meet on June 28, 2022, to evaluate the newest versions and to decide on which are likely to be recommended for use in this fall’s booster shots.

Moderna’s new bivalent vaccine mixes mRNA that encodes for the spike proteins of the original SARS-CoV-2 virus as well as the slightly different spike protein of the more infectious omicron variant.

In early June 2022, Moderna said that in clinical trials, its bivalent vaccine outcompetes the original vaccine strain, inducing a stronger immune response and longer protection against the original

SARS-CoV-2 and its variants, including omicron.

Moderna later announced that its newest formulation also performs well against the newest omicron subvariants, BA.4 and BA.5, which are quickly becoming the dominant strains in the U.S. Because of the significantly stronger immune response that the new shot induces, Moderna predicts that such protection may last a year and plans to introduce its new vaccine in August.

And most recently, on June 25, Pfizer-BioNTech also announced results for its two new COVID-19 vaccine formulations: a bivalent formulation consisting of mRNA that encodes for the spike proteins of the original SARS-CoV-2 strain and the original BA.1 omicron subvariant, and a “monovalent” version that is only directed at the spike protein of BA.1.

The company’s preliminary studies demonstrated that both the monovalent and the bivalent vaccines triggered antibodies that neutralized the newer omicron BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants, although to a lesser degree than the BA.1 subvariant. However, Pfizer’s monovalent vaccine triggered better virus-neutralizing antibodies against the omicron BA.1 subvariant than did the bivalent vaccine.

However, whether the differences in



Clinical studies show that mixing and matching booster vaccines can lead to a more robust immune response. SDI Productions/E+ via Getty Images

the levels of such antibodies seen with the monovalent versus bivalent vaccines translate into different levels of protection against newer omicron variants remains to be established in clinical trials.

Progress on the Novavax vaccine

Another vaccine formulation that is working its way toward authorization is Novavax, a vaccine built using the spike protein of the original SARS-CoV-2 virus. The Novavax vaccine has the advantage of being similar to traditional vaccines, such as the DTaP vaccines against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis, or the vaccines against other viral infections such as hepatitis and shingles. The Novavax