

# Fauci Floats Yearly COVID-19 Shots While Promoting Updated Boosters

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A top U.S. health official on Sept. 6 said that [COVID-19](#) vaccines could turn into a yearly shot, similar to the annual recommended influenza vaccine.

“It is becoming increasingly clear that looking forward with the COVID-19 pandemic, in the absence of a dramatically different variant, we likely are moving towards a path with a vaccination cadence similar to that with the annual influenza vaccine, with annual updated COVID-19 shots matched to the currently circulating strains for most of the population,” Dr. [Anthony Fauci](#), President Joe Biden’s chief medical adviser and [the longtime director](#) of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, told a virtual briefing.

“However, some particularly vulnerable groups may continue to need more frequent vaccination against COVID-19,” Fauci added.

Fauci’s agency does not clear vaccines or deal with vaccination recommendations, but he has often been the government’s most visible health official during the COVID-19 pandemic and previewed key shifts in policy.

And another key official, Dr. Ashish Jha, the White House COVID-19 response coordinator, also spoke of yearly vaccinations.

Barring any major differences in new variants, “for a large majority of Americans, we are moving to a point where a single annual COVID shot should provide a high degree of protection against serious illness all year,” Jha claimed during the briefing.

Critics chastised the officials for speaking about annual vaccinations in light of the dearth of data on the updated boosters.

“Health authorities say a majority of Americans can count on annual COVID vaccinations moving forward, prior to having a scintilla of clinical data on the new boosters & [with] no idea about clinical meaningfulness & duration of effect. How are we supposed to think they’re data-driven?” Jessica Adams, a former regulatory review officer at the Food and Drug Administration, wrote on Twitter.

The officials were speaking days after U.S. regulators [authorized updated COVID-19 vaccine boosters, based on data from mice](#).

“What they’ve shown in lab studies is that these bivalent vaccines help you to mount a slightly higher antibody response against Omicron. But whether that’s going to translate into any kind of clinical efficacy, we don’t know, because we don’t really have those studies,” Soumya Swaminathan, a World Health Organization official, said in a video this week.

The boosters contain elements of a strain that is in common with the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron subvariants. BA.5 currently causes most of the COVID-19 cases in the country, according to federal genomic sequencing data.

The original vaccines, which had never been updated, targeted the 2019 version of the virus that causes COVID-19. They have [become increasingly ineffective](#) against both infection and severe illness.

People cannot get the updated shot unless they've already received the original vaccine as a primary series. For some Americans, the updated booster could be their fifth dose in under two years.

## **Promotion**

Fauci and other U.S. officials during the briefing encouraged people to get vaccinated.

“We fully expect that the updated bivalent vaccines containing BA.4 and BA.5 sequences will offer better protection against currently circulating strains than the original vaccines, although it is difficult to predict at this point, how much better that protection will be,” Fauci said, citing data from human trials for a different formulation, a combination Wuhan-BA.1 shot.

Those trials showed the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines with BA.1 provided higher antibody levels than the original vaccines. Antibodies are believed to be a form of protection against the COVID-19 virus.

While other countries have approved that vaccine, the United States opted to ask manufacturers to switch BA.1 out in favor of the BA.4 and BA.5 sequences.

“One of the very reasons for this bivalent vaccine is not just because it keeps the great protection of the original strain and because it improves the protection against the BA.5 variant, as laboratory data suggests, but also that the laboratory data suggests it will improve protection against other variants as well,” Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said. “So it gives us that breadth of protection that we might anticipate should another variant come through.”