

CDC Director Walensky Tests Positive for COVID-19

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The director of the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) has tested positive for COVID-19, the agency announced on Oct. 22.

Dr. [Rochelle Walensky](#), the director, tested positive on Friday night, according to the CDC.

Walensky, 53, was said to be experiencing “mild symptoms.”

Walensky did not respond to a request for comment. She is isolating at her home and will work remotely, the CDC said.

Senior staffers and close contacts have been informed of the positive test and “are taking appropriate action to monitor their health,” the agency added.

Walensky is described as “up to date” on her vaccines, which refers to the agency’s recommendation that Americans get one or more boosters after a primary series, depending on when a person receives their initial shots.

Walensky received the new bivalent booster from Moderna in Massachusetts in September, [telling ABC News](#) at the time, “I think it’s critically important to do.”

“All the data from this new bivalent vaccine have demonstrated that it will protect you against—more likely protect you—against the strains that we have circulating right now, those Omicron BA.5 strains, as well as keep you well protected, because we’ve seen that some of that protection can wane over time. So, we are really encouraging everybody to roll up their sleeves and get this updated bivalent vaccine,” she added.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted emergency authorization to the booster from Moderna and another like it from Pfizer despite there being [no clinical data](#) available for either shot.

The only evidence it works is from testing from mice, which indicated that neutralizing antibody levels were higher after vaccination.

Experts believe, but do not know for sure, that antibodies help protect against COVID-19.

The CDC [recommended](#) the updated boosters for Americans aged 12 and up in September, and [expanded the availability](#) to children as young as five in October.

Some experts agree with the push for the new shots but others note the uncertainty surrounding a benefit and growing awareness of side effects, including heart inflammation.

“If there’s not clear evidence of benefit, then it’s not fair to ask people to take a risk, no matter how small,” Dr. Paul Offit, an adviser to the FDA, [said](#).

Dr. Vinay Prasad, a professor of epidemiology at the University of California, San Francisco, and a critic of the vaccination push, said that Walensky’s positive test supports his position.

“She received the bivalent booster exactly one month ago at a CVS pharmacy. Right now, she’s probably in the window where the booster exerts the greatest protective effect it could possibly exert, yet still: look what happened,” he wrote in [a blog post](#).

“Before we launch massive vaccination campaigns, we need good evidence that they actually benefit the people we are tasked with protecting and caring for. Rochelle Walensky’s infection is just a reminder to the American people she doesn’t know what she’s talking about, because she has not asked for good evidence,” he added.