

BRIEF19

A daily review of covid-19 research and policy.

POLICY BRIEFING

New CDC guidance on public masking.

In light of the two hundred and thirty million vaccine [doses](#) administered in the United States and the increasing understanding of how SARS-CoV-2 is transmitted, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has [updated](#) its guidelines on public masking for fully-vaccinated individuals. By the CDC definition, the new guidelines apply to all individuals who are at least two weeks out from their final dose. The recommendations can be split into outdoor and indoor settings.

Changes to behavior for fully vaccinated people:

- Visit other fully-vaccinated individuals without wearing masks.
- Visit the homes of low-risk unvaccinated individuals without wearing masks.
- Aside from crowded venues, participate in outdoor and recreational activities without wearing a mask.
- Refrain from needing to self-quarantine after travel or if asymptomatic after a potential exposure.

Continued behavior for fully vaccinated people:

- Wear a mask at public indoor events.
- Wear a mask when visiting multiple groups of unvaccinated people.
- Avoid large, indoor group events.
- Get tested if symptomatic.

It is important to note that these are merely federal recommendations, and do not supersede local, state, or federal requirements, or employer mandates. *Various. [28 April 2021](#). —Brief19 Policy Team*

Changes sought to address missed coronavirus vaccine doses.

As vaccine rollout has continued, it seems clear that America's initial strategy of prioritizing two doses is working out, for the most part. In the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [interim data](#) analyzing the vaccinations from December 2020 to February 2021, a vast majority of adults who received their first dose of one of the mRNA vaccines (Moderna or Pfizer/BioNTech) had received both shots. Of the 12.5 million Americans who had received a shot in the arm at the time of the analysis, 88 percent had received two doses, nine percent were waiting on a second shot, but were still within the allowable window. Just three percent were overdue. Demographically, older adults and American Indians/Alaskan Natives were most likely to have not received the full vaccine series.

This initial report posited that as vaccine eligibility expanded, this noncompliance would likely expand. That theory has been borne out by newer data [showing](#) eight percent of recipients having missed their second appointment, totaling more than five million people.

The reasons for this growing trend are varied, but in many ways predictable. Many recipients had flu-like symptoms following their initial dose and didn't want to relive the experience. Others have lingering questions over efficacy and necessity given the flood of misinformation. Other still are hindered by logistics, as they cannot get easily get back to their provider to complete the series. To combat the latter problem, federal health officials have [directed](#) pharmacies to provide second doses to individuals who received their initial inoculation at other locations. This practice raises legitimate concerns surrounding accurate tracking of vaccination status but increasing ease of access outweighs such issues.

While the CDC is making it easier to find a second dose, the agency [emphasized](#) that the different vaccines are *not* thought to be interchangeable and that individuals should receive both shots from the same series in order to be considered fully immunized. Meanwhile, the US Food and Drug Administration has also reaffirmed its Emergency Use Authorization of the single-dose Janssen Pharmaceuticals (Johnson & Johnson) dose, which should also help push the campaign forward. *Various. [30 April 2021](#).*

—Brief19 Policy Team

More details emerge on US aid to India as coronavirus crisis intensifies.

On Wednesday, April 28, the Biden Administration announced plans to deliver supplies worth over \$100 million to provide relief to India in its battle against covid-19. United States government assistance flights will begin to arrive on Thursday, April 29, and will continue into next week. This move comes in effort to demonstrate the United States' solidarity with India as it battles a new wave of covid-19 cases. The United States and India have worked closely together to respond to the pandemic, including US partnerships with over 1,000 Indian healthcare facilities aimed at strengthening preparedness and launching joint covid-19 prevention public messaging efforts with UNICEF. The plans come after the US came under increased pressure to offer assistance to India, which has emerged as the epicenter of the pandemic.

While the plans were announced over the weekend, we now have more granular information. The US is providing India oxygen support, oxygen concentrators, oxygen generation units (PSA systems), personal protective equipment, vaccine manufacturing supplies, 1 million rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs), therapeutics, and public health assistance. Included in this assistance is the redirection of its order of AstraZeneca manufacturing supplies to India, allowing India to have over 20 million doses of the vaccine. Also included in the assistance are 15 million N95 masks to protect both patients and healthcare personnel.

In pledging this assistance, the Biden Administration touted the seven decade-long partnership between US public health experts and Indian officials on a variety of health and disease-related concerns. [29 April 2021](#).
—Miranda Yaver, PhD

US to share vaccine oversupply with the rest of the world.

As much of the world experiences surging numbers of SARS-CoV-2 infections, the United States on Monday announced [plans](#) to relinquish supply of up to 60 million doses of covid-19 vaccine in an effort to help other struggling countries protect their populations.

Currently, AstraZeneca's shot is available in other countries. However, it has yet to undergo the Emergency Use Authorization process through the US Food and Drug Administration. Previously, the US has shared some of its supply with Mexico and Canada, and now it will likely send unused supplies to countries struggling with skyrocketing caseloads. It is seen as increasingly unlikely that the US will not need to use its supply of the AstraZeneca option in order to inoculate most of its population.

In recent weeks, the United States government has faced increasing worldwide scrutiny and accusations of hoarding its vaccine oversupply while countries, including India, struggle to manage an overwhelming number of new cases of covid-19.

Unfortunately, the specific doses likely to be shared abroad were produced at the same manufacturing facility as the Johnson & Johnson product that has previously been reported to have had significant quality issues. Due to these concerns, the plant has stopped making the AstraZeneca formulation and the company is searching for a new manufacturer for production of the remaining ordered doses. Over the weekend, it was announced that the United States is also planning to share the raw materials needed for the vaccine formulation with other nations so that doses can be produced internationally as well. *The Associated Press*. [27 April 2021](#).

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Brief19 is a daily executive summary of covid-19-related medical research, news, and public policy. It was founded and created by frontline emergency medicine physicians with expertise in medical research critique, health policy, and public policy.