

FDA authorises Pfizer shots for adolescents

US Galloping Back To Normal On Back Of Vaccines

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Washington:

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorised the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA shots for adolescents in the 12-15 year age groups on Monday as America rapidly returns to normal on the strength and confidence of delivering vaccines to nearly half its population and better understanding of how the virus spreads.

States and counties are aiming to jab nearly 17 million kids in this age group before taking it down to lower age groups, even as pockets of vaccine resistance continues in conservative enclaves across the country despite its proven efficacy. Both administrations and the private sector are rolling out strategies to deliver vaccines to the reluctant and the uncaring: In the Washington DC area, famed restaurateur Jose Andres is offering \$50 gift certificates for vaccinated customers, and ride sharing apps, with encouragement from the White House, are offering free rides to vaccination sites.

With new Covid-19 infections down to around 40,000 per day (compared to around 4,00,000 per day in India), states, counties, and cities are easing capacity restrictions on indoor gatherings for retail stores, movie theatres, museums, gyms, hair salons etc. Movie halls have already reopened in most parts of the country and Broadway is set to show off its wares at 100% capacity in a few weeks as actors return to sets.

And in sharp contrast to India, where a severe shutdown is confining people to their homes, open-air activities have gotten a green signal following a scientific reassessment that shows a minuscule chance of virus transmission outdoors (except in enclosed spaces and in close proximity), particularly if one is masked. Parks and recreation grounds, which some experts say were unreasonably shut down on exaggerated fears of surface transmission early in pandemic, are thrumming with life again.

Epidemiologists are now saying the rare outdoor transmissions that have occurred account for possibly less than 0.1% of infections (rather than the 10% that was initially estimated). They typically involved crowded places outdoors or close proximity engagement.

Although there is a degree of wariness about the virus resurfacing again particularly in the form of mutant strains of the kind devastating India, there is a high degree of confidence in the efficacy of mRNA vaccines deployed in US. In fact, experts are advising people to get the vaccine even after they have been infected with the virus.

“Does recovering from Covid confer protection against future infections? More evidence that yes it does. 91% lower odds of being infected if previously infected and had generated antibodies,” Dr Ashish Jha, Brown University's Dean of Public Health said on Tuesday, tweeting a new study. However, he cautioned that protection from prior infection is “unlikely as robust as that from vaccine” and vaccines seem to provide “both better and more durable protection.” “So if you’ve been previously infected, you still need the shot,” he urged.



Visitors return to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. With new Covid-19 infections in the US down to around 40,000 per day, states are easing capacity restrictions on indoor gatherings for retail stores, movie theatres, museums, gyms, hair salons etc