



2021 ANNUAL  
VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

# BENEFIT STRATEGIES FOR THE NEW NORMAL

May 18 - 19 - 20



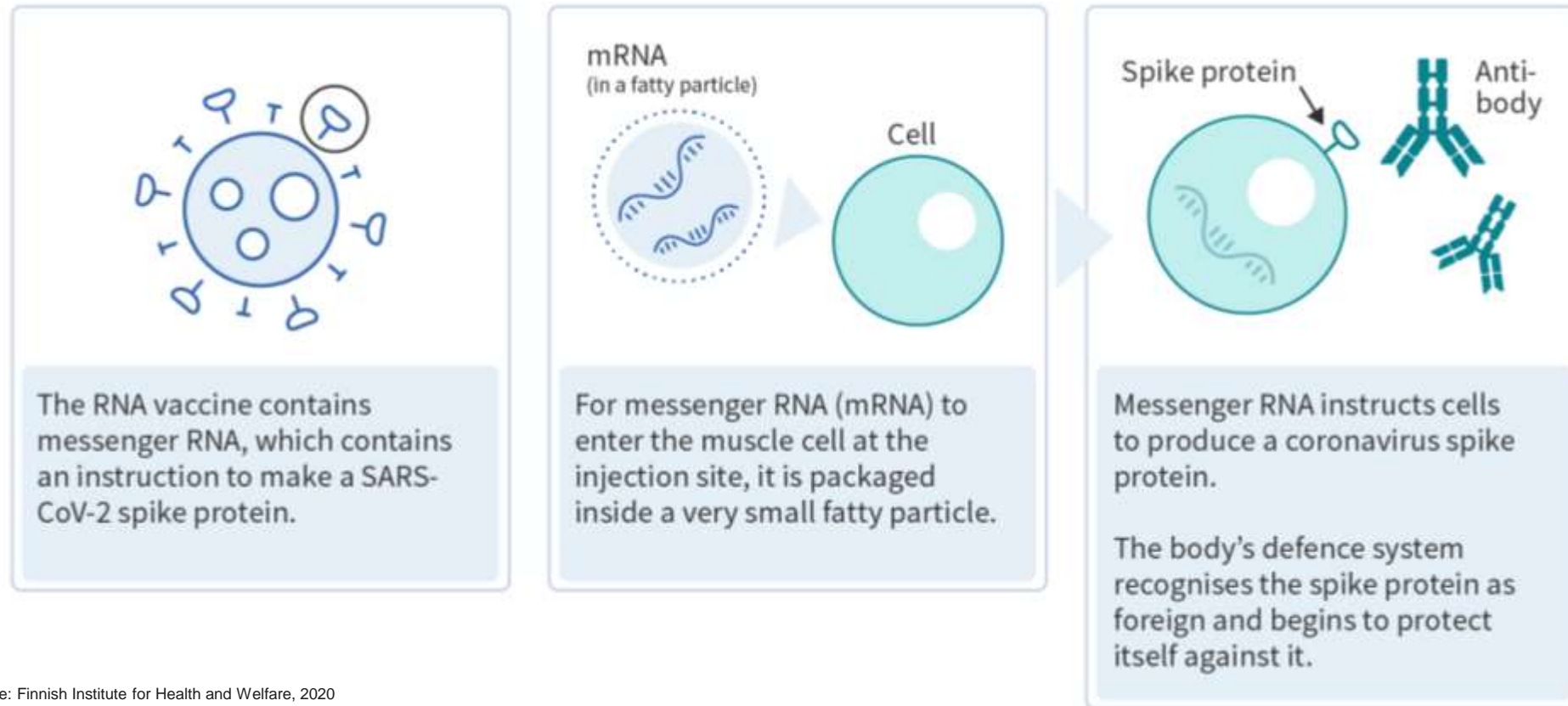
## COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATE

LESLIE WEISBERG, M.D. - CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER, SOUTH REGION  
BLUE CROSS AND BLUE SHIELD OF TEXAS



# How Do mRNA Vaccines Work?

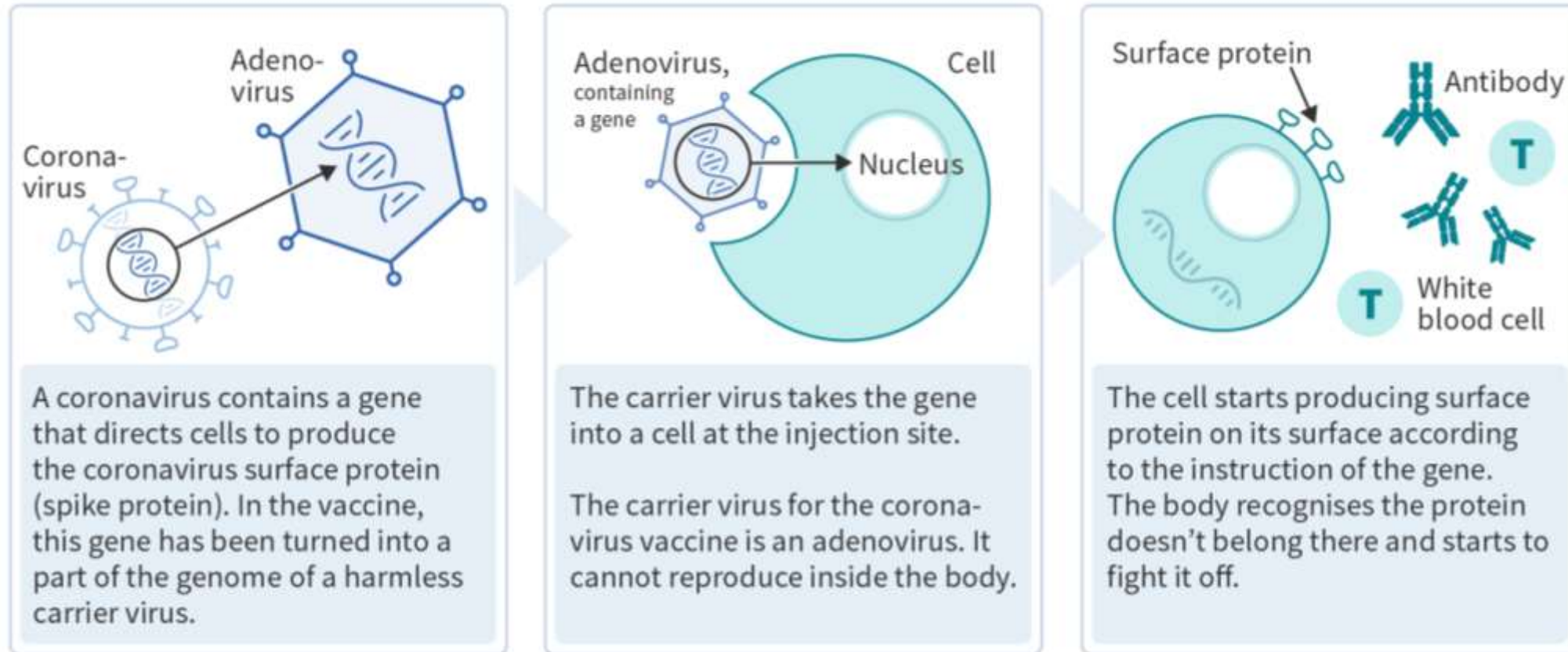
Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna



Source: Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, 2020

# How Do Adenovirus Vaccines Work?

Johnson & Johnson, AstraZeneca



# COVID-19 Vaccine Candidates

Updated as of 4/27/21

| Vaccine Manufacture                | Clinical Trial Status                  | Administration            | FDA EUA Application Status | Potential General Side Effects*  |
|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Pfizer-BioNTech                    | Phase 3 complete;<br>90-95% effective  | 2-doses;<br>3 weeks apart | Approved 12/11/20          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pain, redness or swelling where the shot was given</li> <li>• Fever, Fatigue, Headache, Muscle pain, Chills</li> <li>• Mild to moderate side effects will go away within a few days</li> <li>• CDC has a site to report any ADVERSE reactions to vaccine, different than expected side effects.</li> <li>• Women younger than 50 should be aware of the rare but increased risk of thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) with the J&amp;J COVID-19 vaccine. TTS is a serious condition that involves blood clots with low platelets.</li> </ul> |
| Moderna                            | Phase 3 complete;<br>95% effective     | 2-doses;<br>4 weeks apart | Approved 12/18/20          |  |
| AstraZeneca & University of Oxford | Phase 3 wrapping up;<br>~90% effective | 2-doses,<br>1 month apart | Preparing application      |  |
| Johnson & Johnson                  | Phase 3 complete;<br>66% effective     | 1-dose                    | Approved 2/27/21           |  |
| Novavax                            | Phase 3 in process                     | 2 doses;<br>3 weeks apart | Not yet eligible to apply  |  |
| Sanofi & GSK                       | Phase 1/2 in process                   | Not yet released          | Not yet eligible to apply  |  |

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/expect/after.html>

Otherwise refer to individual vaccine package labeling for specific vaccine side effect profile

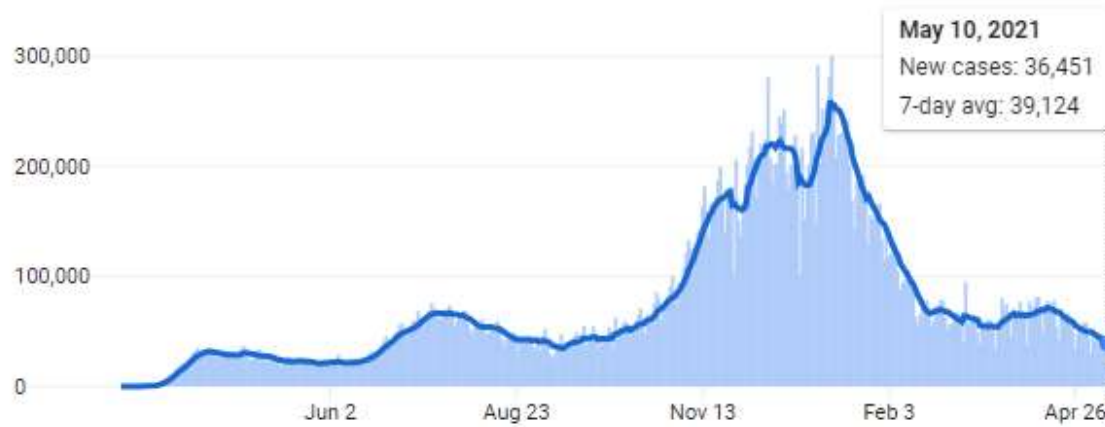


# Optimistic Outlook for Covid-19 Trends

## National

Positive – 32.8m

Deaths – 582k

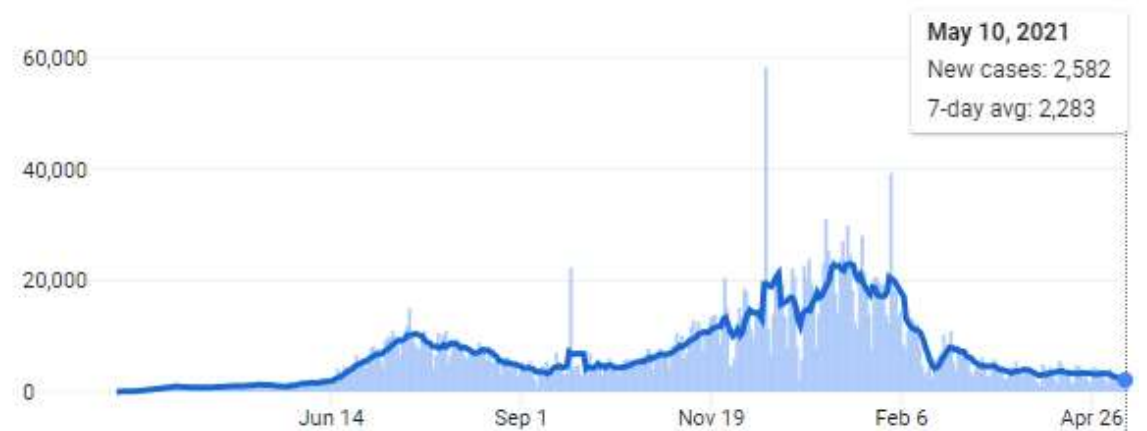


Solid line = 7-day moving average

## Texas

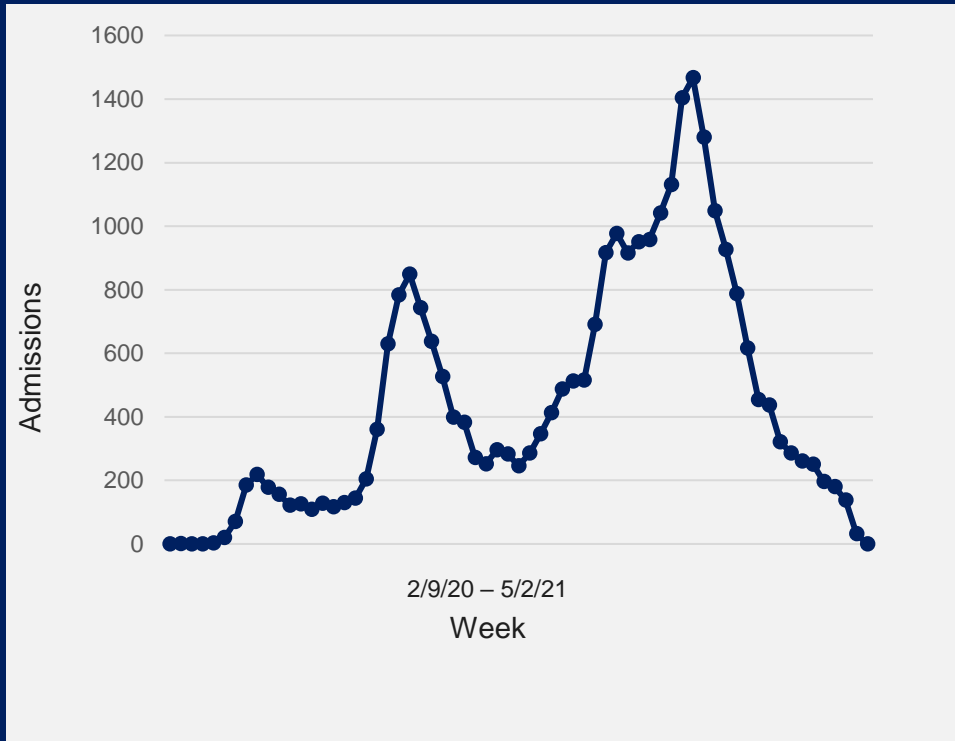
Positive – 2.92m

Deaths – 50,828

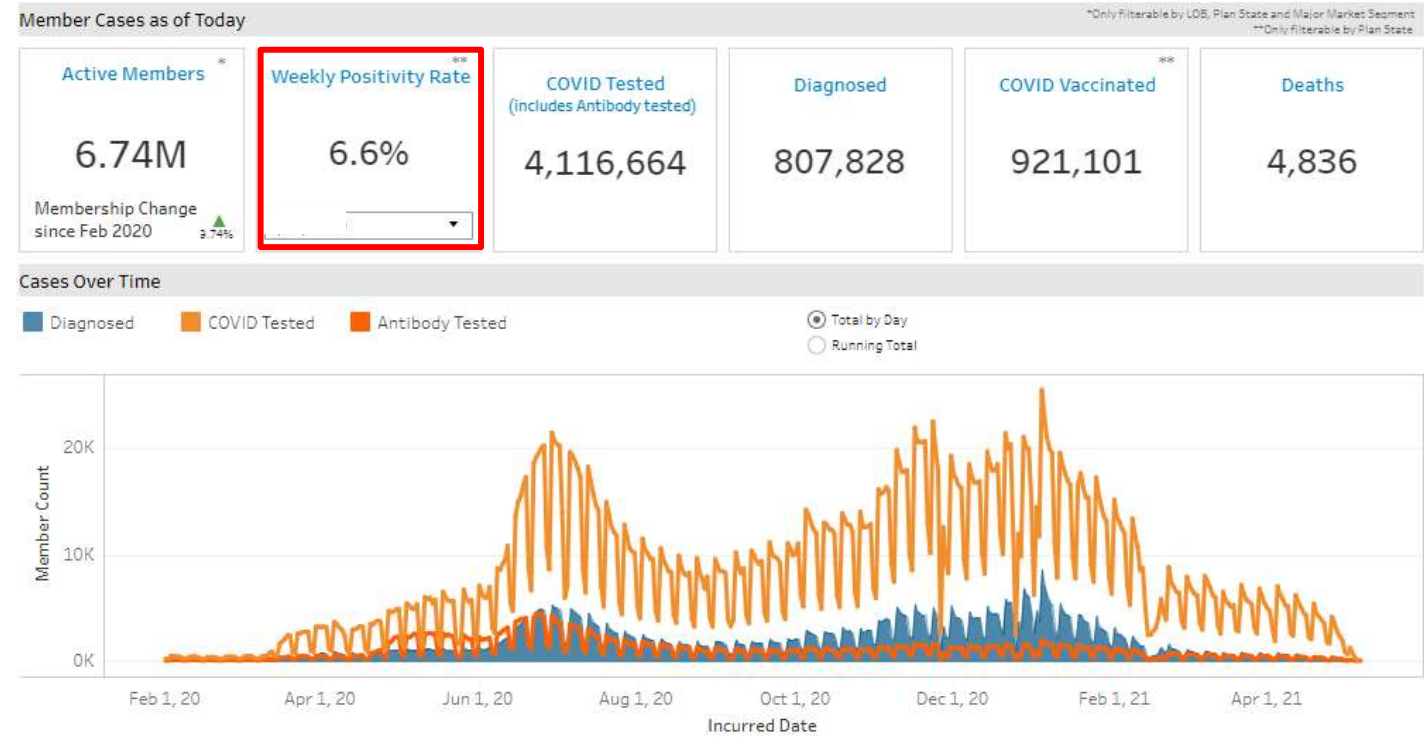


# COVID-19 Hospitalizations by Week

Per BCBSTX Claims



# Weekly Positivity Rate Per BCBSTX Claims



# CDC Recommendations: What You Need to Know About Receiving a COVID-19 Vaccine



## Should you get a COVID-19 Vaccine?

**COVID-19 vaccination will help keep you from getting COVID-19.** [FACT: COVID-19 vaccines will not give you COVID-19](#)

- Based on what we know about vaccines for other diseases, experts believe that getting a COVID-19 vaccine may help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19.
- Getting vaccinated yourself may also protect people around you, particularly people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19
- If you have a history of severe allergic reactions, are pregnant, breastfeeding, immunocompromised states, and / or certain health conditions talk with your doctor before getting a vaccine.

## Should I get the vaccine if I had COVID-19?

- Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection with COVID-19 is possible, people may be advised to get a COVID-19 vaccine even if they have been sick with COVID-19 before.

## Will I need to continue wearing masks, social distancing and hand washing after receiving vaccine?

- **Yes**, It will be important for everyone to continue using **all the tools** available to us to help stop this pandemic, like covering your mouth and nose with a mask, washing hands often, and staying at least 6 feet away from others.

Sources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/underlying-conditions.html>:



# National CDC Vaccine Administration Priority

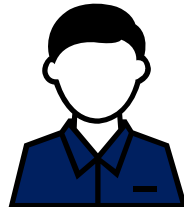
- Priority established by the Centers for Disease Control (December 22, 2020)
- Each priority segment **may take months** to accomplish and date estimates for other populations vary
- ***Actual vaccine prioritization and administration plan may vary by other Federal Agencies and/or State; refer to specific State's administration plan for further details.***

## FIRST PRIORITY



- Health Care Workers
- Long-Term Care Facility Residents

## NEXT PRIORITY



- Frontline Essential Workers  
(Education Sector, public transit, food and agriculture, police, firefighters, correction officers, U.S. Postal Service, manufacturing, grocery store)
- Adults 75+

## NEXT PRIORITY



- People Aged 16-64 with underlying medical conditions
- Adults 65+
- Other Essential Workers  
(Transportation and logistics, food service, housing construction and finance, information technology, communications, energy, law, media, public safety, and public health)



SOURCES:

[HTTPS://WWW.CDC.GOV/CORONAVIRUS/2019](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019)

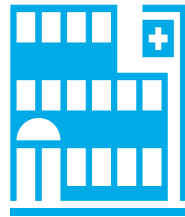




## Texas Vaccination Rollout



As of **March 29<sup>th</sup>**, **all adults** in Texas are eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine along with those **16+** with a **health condition** that may increase the severity of COVID-19 illness.



Texas has established vaccine sites or “**hubs**” across the state for efficient and equitable distribution. [Visit the Texas Department of Health and Human Services website](#) for **eligibility and access information**.



**States differ in their eligibility requirements** based on supply and vaccination progress. Be sure to check state-specific health guidelines for up-to-date eligibility guidelines.

# Vaccine Distribution

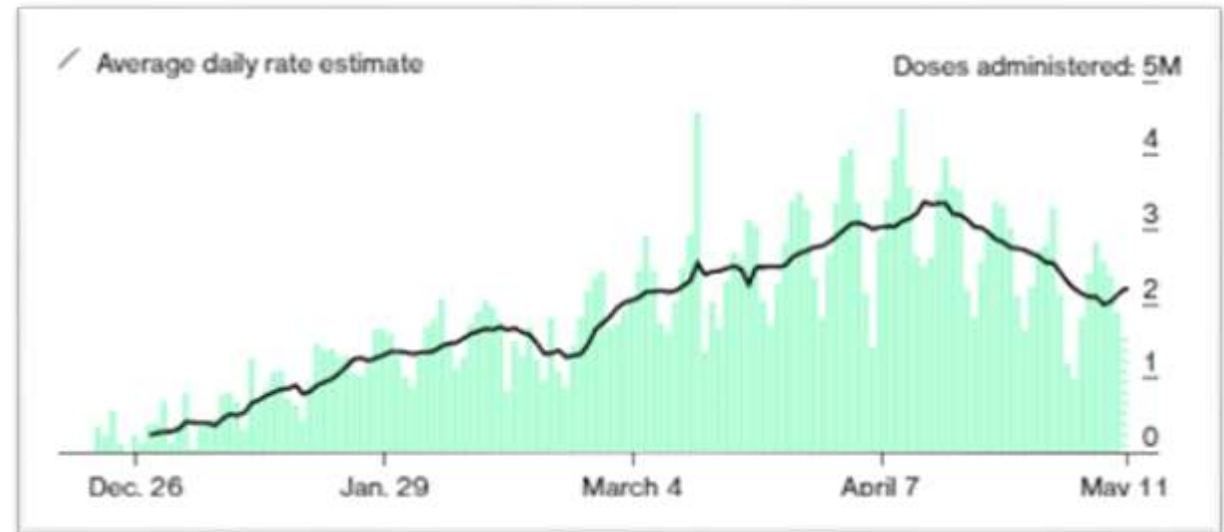
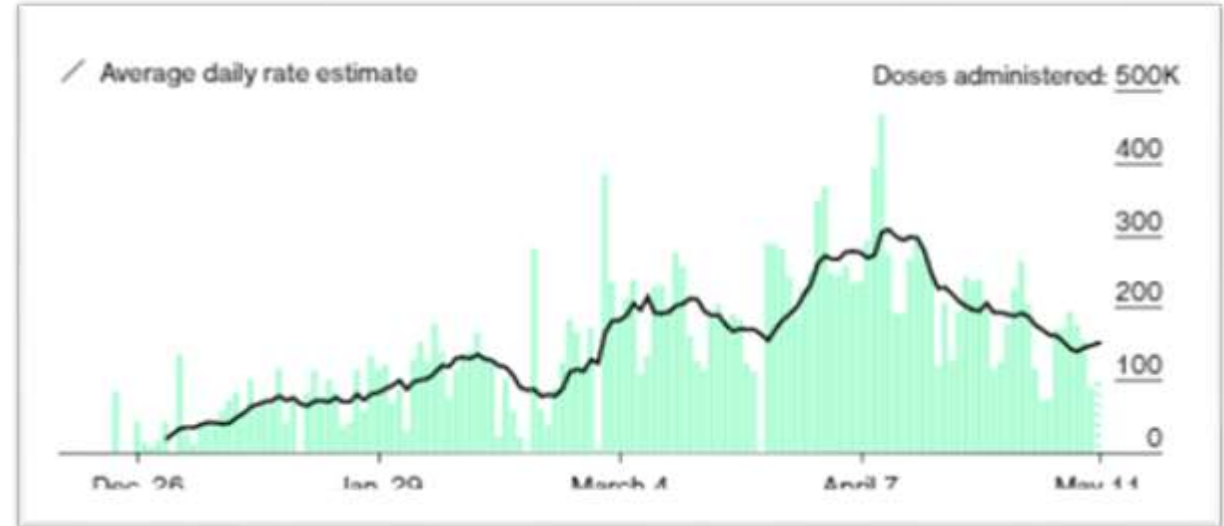
## State and National

| Texas                           |                                  |  |   |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Doses Distributed<br><b>27M</b> | Doses Administered<br><b>20M</b> | Received At Least One Dose<br><b>39.9%</b> | Received 2 <sup>nd</sup> Dose<br><b>30.6%</b> |

**5 months** to 75%  
(Threshold for return to normalcy, per Dr. Fauci)

| National                         |                                   |   |   |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| Doses Distributed<br><b>336M</b> | Doses Administered<br><b>263M</b> | Received 1 <sup>st</sup> Dose<br><b>46.2%</b> | Received 2 <sup>nd</sup> Dose<br><b>35.1%</b> |

**3 months** to 75%  
(Threshold for return to normalcy, per Dr. Fauci)



# COVID Vaccine Costs & Employer Impact



## Coverage Guidance

- **Affordable Care Act (ACA):** Covers routine preventive care at no member cost
- **CARES Act:** All plans must cover approved ACIP-recommended COVID-19 vaccines at no cost-sharing – Grand-fathered plans strongly encouraged to offer \$0 coverage
- **Commercial plans:** non-grandfathered plans are expected to cover fully for FI, ASO, HIM
- **Uninsured adults** will have no-cost access through Federally-supported distribution programs (FQHCs, special administration centers, etc.) and through additional administration programs designed by states
- **Children** <16 years are not currently approved for vaccination. Pending further studies and approval in children vaccination would be covered by the covering health plan or Vaccines for Children Program

Sources:

<https://www.hhs.gov/healthcare/about-the-aca/preventive-care/index.html>

<https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/fourth-covid-19-interim-final-rule-comment-period-ifc-4>



# COVID Vaccine Costs & Employer Impact



## Anticipated Costs\*

### Vaccine

- Initial COVID-19 vaccines will be purchased by federal government (estimated costs about \$10-37 per dose) when provided by the federal supply
- No vaccine costs to employers/plan sponsors
- Provider Billing
  - Medical: will submit using new COVID-19 vaccine billing codes
  - Pharmacy: will submit COVID-19 vaccine NDC number

### Associated Administration Fees

- Plan sponsors/employers should expect to cover vaccine administration and associated visits; there will be provider options through both medical and pharmacy benefits
- Provider billing
  - Medical: COVID-specific vaccine and administration billing codes for medical claims have been released and loaded by health plans
  - Pharmacy: COVID vaccine and administration claims will be billed as prescriptions
- Provider reimbursement
  - Medical: As of 12/9/2020, estimated medical cost to administer vaccine is \$1.55-\$2.70 PMPM based on CMS reimbursement guidance. This assumes half of membership will be vaccinated, vaccine administration fees of 2 doses, associated visit and compliance.
  - Pharmacy: alignment with CMS guidance
  - CMS reimbursement guidance during Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) effective 3/15/21
    - 2-dose series: 1<sup>st</sup> dose at \$40 ; 2<sup>nd</sup> dose at \$40
    - 1-dose series: \$40

*\*Actual Costs may vary. Consult your own Legal and Financial representatives to confirm actual costs*



# COVID Vaccine Costs & Employer Impact



## Considerations

- Employer plans:
  - Align with your current ACA preventive coverage for preventive immunizations
  - Consider allowing coverage under both medical and pharmacy benefits to remove any access barriers for members
- Vaccine accessibility varies by geography, health-system structure, etc.
  - BCBS is bridging members for vaccination through Provider Finder
  - The CDC has a resource that links members to local health departments for vaccine appointments
- Expect technology to be important for finding vaccine providers, scheduling appointments and reminders
- Low-tech immunization cards and electronic state vaccine records and registries will be critical
  - Which vaccine did a member receive as 1st dose?
  - When was member's 1st dose?
- Claim submission codes to indicate 2nd doses will assist in series completion

# Key Takeaways

- ✓ Johnson and Johnson, Pfizer, and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines have been approved for use to protect against serious illness from COVID-19.
- ✓ Texas has made vaccines available for ages 16+, but each state may differ in their regulations. Check the CDC or state health websites for current eligibility and access information.
- ✓ There is no cost to employer/plan sponsors to purchase the vaccine, however employers/sponsors should expect to pay for administration and associated visits.
- ✓ Individuals should consult with their own health care provider if they have any questions or concerns with respect to the diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of COVID-19.

# Q&A