

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2021

Remarks Following a Briefing From Members of the White House COVID-19 Response Team

December 16, 2021

The President. Folks, I'm not going to take questions today because I have a direct message to the American people and tomorrow the team is going to be on television and talking in more detail about what I'm going to be speaking about today.

But I want to send a direct message to the American people: Due to the steps we've taken, Omicron has not yet spread as fast as it would have otherwise done and as is happening in Europe. But it's here now, and it's spreading, and it's going to increase.

For unvaccinated, we are looking at a winter of severe illness and death—for unvaccinated—for themselves, their families, and the hospitals they'll soon overwhelm.

But there's good news: If you're vaccinated and you had your booster shot, you're protected from severe illness and death—period. Number two, booster shots work. Three, boosters are free, safe, and convenient.

About 60 million people have one—have been boosted. So go get your shot today. Go get boosted if you've had your first two shots. If you haven't, go get your first shot. It's time. It's time. It's past time.

And we're going to protect our economic recovery if we do this. We're going to keep schools and businesses open if we do this. And I want to see everyone around enjoy that. I want to see them enjoy the fact that they're able to be in school, that businesses are open and the holidays are coming.

So get your booster shot. It's critically important.

And if you haven't—if you haven't—gotten your booster shot, get your first shot. We're in a situation where we have 83 percent of the American people who've gotten one shot, 12 years and older, 400,000 shots per day now. Two hundred and two are fully vaccinated—202 million are fully vaccinated.

Fifty-seven—excuse me, five hundred and seventy—excuse me—I don't want to read—I'm not sure I got the right number. The total number of boosters is what?

Chief Medical Adviser and National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony S. Fauci. Fifty-seven million.

The President. Fifty-seven million boosters, 1 million a day.

So—but the whole point is, Omicron is here, it's going to start to spread much more rapidly in the beginning of the year, and the only real protection is to get your shots. If you get one shot—if you haven't gotten it yet—that will help.

If you're at a point where you have everything, including your booster, you're in really good shape. So move now. Move now.

Thank you all very much.

Q. Do you feel like this time——

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:48 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. Also participating in the briefing were Vice President Kamala D. Harris; Domestic Policy Adviser to the Vice President Rohini Kosoglu; John R. Mascola, Director, and Julie E. Ledgerwood, Director and Deputy Director, Dale and Betty Bumpers Vaccine Research Center at the National Institutes of Health; and White House COVID–19 Response Coordinator Jeffrey D. Zients and Deputy Coordinator Natalie Quillian.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : White House COVID–19 response team, briefing.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Fauci, Anthony S.

Subjects: Communications : News media :: Presidential interviews; Diseases : Coronavirus, domestic prevention efforts; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; White House Office : Assistants to the President :: Chief Medical Adviser.

DCPD Number: DCPD202101064.