

# First COVID-19 vaccine tested in US poised for final testing

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The first COVID-19 vaccine tested in the U.S. revved up people's immune systems just the way scientists had hoped, researchers reported Tuesday — as the shots are poised to begin key final testing.

“No matter how you slice this, this is good news,” Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. government's top infectious disease expert, told The Associated Press.

The experimental vaccine, developed by Fauci's colleagues at the National Institutes of Health and Moderna Inc., will start its most important step around July 27: A 30,000-person study to prove if the shots really are strong enough to protect against the coronavirus.

But Tuesday, researchers reported anxiously awaited findings from the first 45 volunteers who rolled up their sleeves back in March. Sure enough, the vaccine provided a hoped-for immune boost.

Those early volunteers developed what are called neutralizing antibodies in their bloodstream — molecules key to blocking infection — at levels comparable to those found in people who survived COVID-19, the research team reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

“This is an essential building block that is needed to move forward with the trials that could actually determine whether the vaccine does protect against infection,” said Dr. Lisa Jackson of the Kaiser Permanente Washington Research Institute in Seattle, who led the study.

There's no guarantee, but the government hopes to have results around the end of the year — record-setting speed for developing vaccine.

The vaccine requires two doses a month apart.

There were no serious side effects. But more than half the study participants reported flu-like reactions to the shots that aren't uncommon with other vaccines — fatigue, headache, chills, fever and pain at the injection site. For three participants given the highest dose, those reactions were more severe; that dose isn't



A subject receives a shot in the first-stage safety study clinical trial of a potential vaccine by Moderna for COVID-19 on March 16 at the Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute in Seattle. According to results released on Tuesday, early-stage testing showed the first COVID-19 vaccine tested in the U.S. revved up people's immune systems the way scientists had hoped. ASSOCIATED PRESS

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being pursued.

Some of those reactions are similar to coronavirus symptoms but they're temporary, lasting about a day and occur right after vaccination, researchers noted.

“Small price to pay for protection against COVID,” said Dr. William Schaffner of Vanderbilt University Medical Center, a vaccine expert who wasn't involved with the study.

He called the early results “a good first step,” and is optimistic that final testing could deliver answers about whether it's really safe and effective by the beginning of next year.

“It would be wonderful. But that assumes everything's working right on schedule,” Schaffner cautioned.

Moderna's share price jumped nearly 15 percent in trading after U.S. markets closed. Shares

of the company, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, have nearly quadrupled this year.

Tuesday's results only included younger adults. The first-step testing later was expanded to include dozens of older adults, the age group most at risk from COVID-19. Those results aren't public yet but regulators are evaluating them. Fauci said final testing will include older adults, as well as people with chronic health conditions that make them more vulnerable to the virus — and Black and Latino populations likewise affected.

Nearly two dozen possible COVID-19 vaccines are in various stages of testing around the world. Candidates from China and Britain's Oxford University also are entering final testing stages.

The 30,000-person study will mark the world's largest study of a potential COVID-19 vaccine so far. And the NIH-developed shot isn't the only one set for such massive U.S. testing, crucial to spot rare side effects. The government plans similar large studies of the Oxford candidate and another by Johnson & Johnson; separately, Pfizer Inc. is planning its own huge study.

Already, people can start signing up to volunteer for the different studies.

People think “this is a race for one winner. Me, I'm cheering every one of them on,” said Fauci, who directs NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

“We need multiple vaccines. We need vaccines for the world, not only for our own country.”

Around the world, governments are investing in stockpiles of hundreds of millions of doses of the different candidates, in hopes of speedily starting inoculations if any are proven to work.

they always want more," he said with a laugh.

The Humphreys are able to give suggestions of places to go, restaurants to check out, wineries to visit and, whenever the need arises, places for car repairs or haircuts.

"That's where Neighbors Helping Neighbors has really helped us, because, suddenly, all this information is available about all these services out there," Greg said. "So if somebody asks me about anything, pretty much, where to get a tire repaired, for example, I know of all these small businesses in the area."

Neighbors Helping Neighbors is a partnership between The Journal and people in the community to help locally owned small businesses promote themselves as they recover from the economic effects of the pandemic. Local residents are donating to the program, and The Journal is matching funds dollar-for-dollar in advertising to promote the efforts and products of small, locally owned businesses at no cost.

The index of small businesses has come in handy as the Humphreys send their guests out to explore the community. With almost two full years under their bed and breakfast belt, they've found pride in being part of and giving back to Oconee County.

"You meet so many different people, and people tell us so many stories and share so much of their personal life journeys," Suzanne said. "Our faith is really important to us, so it was a natural transition for, I think, serving people. We're thankful we're part of the community."

"Oconee is such a cool county," Greg added. "There's something about it. We look after other businesses around here by referring them, and we know the community is looking after us."

*Want to help? To support the Neighbors Helping Neighbors program, visit [upstatetoday.com](http://upstatetoday.com) and click the appropriate link. The website accepts all major credit and debit cards, and checks made out to Neighbors Helping Neighbors can be delivered to 210 W. North 1st St., Seneca, SC 29678.*

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