

# Vaccine distribution

The public dialogue about how coronavirus vaccines should be distributed presents a false choice. If you listen to Donald Trump, you might believe we will have 300 million shots ready to be delivered as soon as the FDA gives the green light. The president assures us that their approval will probably happen very soon. Under this scenario, some Americans will

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start getting their vaccinations right away and everyone will be vaccinated in a short period of time. If you listen to many democrats, you might believe that no one should get a shot until the experts are convinced that the vaccine is safe and effective. Under this scenario, it might be a long time before anyone gets a shot for the coronavirus.

The false choice is a choice between a vaccination that is ready for everyone and one that is not yet ready for anyone. We should resist the feeling that this choice is our only option.

We can do better. Instead of insisting that the vaccine cannot be administered until it is cleared

for everyone, we should clear the vaccine for use by one group at a time.

The vaccine should be cleared for the most vulnerable group first. This group probably includes people who live in nursing homes. Because these people are elderly and living together in a crowded space, they are especially vulnerable to the virus. Because this group faces such a high mortality rate when they catch the virus, it may be worth allowing them to take the risk associated with getting their shots early. As the nursing home residents are getting their shots, the clinical trials will continue. After enough time has passed, we may get enough information to feel comfortable about giving the vaccine to the next most vulnerable group.

This next group to get a shot may be healthcare workers. As this group gets their shots, the clinical trials can still continue. This may give us enough time to generate results that will allow us to feel comfortable giving the shot to the next group in line.

As we move from group to group, our knowledge about the vaccination will increase. As it looks more likely that a vaccine is safe and effective, we can start giving the shots to groups that face lower mortality rates from the virus. Probably the last group we will want to vaccinate is children. Why? Because children are very likely to live after they contract the virus.

Therefore, we do not want to give them the vaccination unless we are very confident that it is safe.

Anyone who gets a coronavirus vaccination will face some risk. We only started testing these vaccines recently. We do not know what side effects might appear six months after the shot. People, who are in a group that faces a high risk of dying from the disease, might see enough gain from the shot that they may want to get it soon. People, who are in a group that have a low risk of dying from the coronavirus, should wait until we have better information about the safety of the vaccine. In short, the vaccine should be rolled out over a period of time rather than released to everyone at a single point in time.