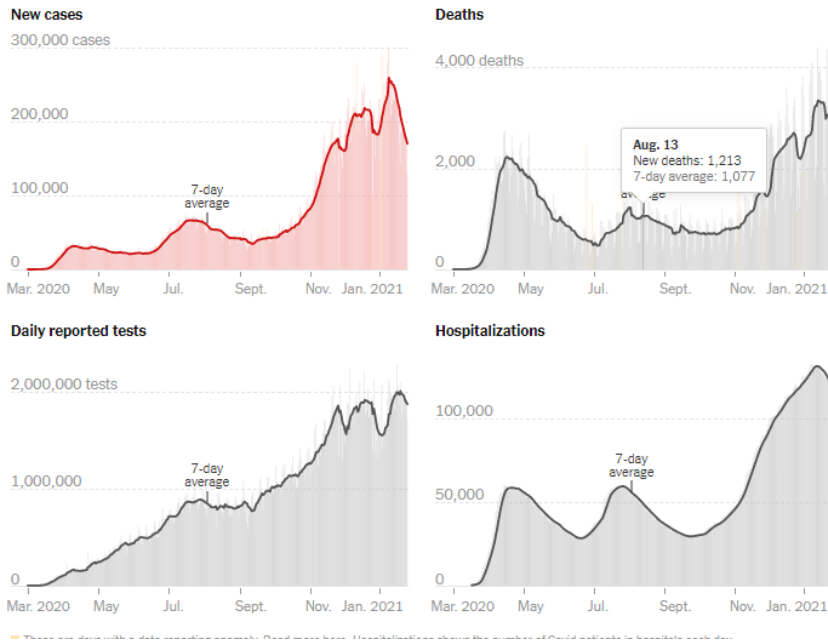


It's officially been a year since the first confirmed COVID-19 case in the US and after >25M known cases and ~420,000 deaths I am cautiously optimistic that we may be turning the corner after a significant holiday peak. **Last week new cases dropped 21%! As cases, hospitalizations and ICU admissions fall, there should also be much lower mortality.** When local COVID surges occur and ICUs reach >75% capacity the *death rate is double* compared to ICU capacity of 25%. It is simply harder to provide optimal care under duress when staff are fatigued and overwhelmed. We must keep up our efforts to reduce community spread for the sake of all of friends and families. Between vaccines and infections, **most experts predict herd immunity by summer and earlier if more people are immunized quickly.** President Biden has increased his goal to 1.5M vaccines per day for 100 days and experts believe this is attainable.

## United States

Known cases are going down. The average number of new cases in the United States fell to **170,559** yesterday, a **3 percent decrease** from the day before. Since January of last year, at least **1 in 13** people who live in the United States have been infected, and at least **1 in 791** have died.

	ON JAN. 24	DAILY AVG. IN LAST 7 DAYS	PER 100,000	14-DAY CHANGE	TOTAL REPORTED
Cases	129,527	170,559	51	-33% →	25,236,139
Deaths	1,815	3,085	0.93	-5% →	419,731
Hospitalized	110,628	118,688	33	-9% →	



Despite some improvement, the next few months remain worrisome and we all need to continue our well-established safety protocols. **Please review this list of COVID-19 symptoms and STAY HOME IF SICK!**

- **Fever or chills**
- **Cough**
- **Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing**
- **Fatigue**
- **Muscle or body aches**
- **Headache**
- **New loss of taste or smell**
- **Sore throat**
- **Congestion or runny nose**
- **Nausea or vomiting**
- **Diarrhea**

We have experienced increasing numbers of staff exhibiting mild and/or less common symptoms and not associating them with possible coronavirus infection, which then potentially exposes staff and patients. Another complicating factor is that once vaccinated (= both doses plus time for full immunity) there is still a 1 in 20 risk of infection if exposed, although the symptoms and severity of disease will be significantly reduced. So, a **minor issue** (sore throat, body aches, headache or diarrhea) could be the **only sign of COVID infection once partially or fully immunized**. Therefore, it is critical to remain aware, cautious and conservative when considering these symptoms and one's ability to work in the clinical care setting.

**Travel restrictions** have also been recently enhanced by the CDC and remain in the highest **Phase 4 status of Very High Risk**. All travelers into the US are required to present an approved negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours prior to travel. QualDerm follows these guidelines for all employees. Check here for updates and information on mandatory testing and quarantine.

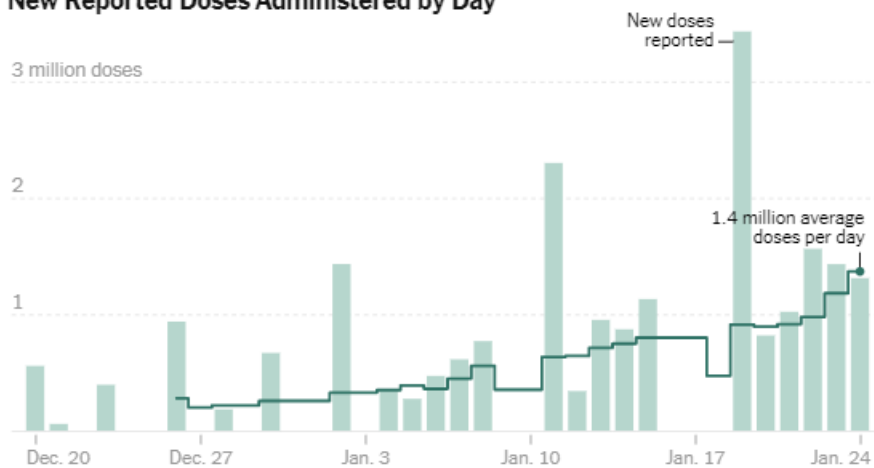
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notice.html>

### **COVID-19 News**

- New mutations of coronavirus have created **variants that appear more infectious and transmissible**, including B.1.1.7 (UK), 1.351 (South Africa), P.1 (Brazil)
  - UNKNOWNs include:
    - How widely have variants spread worldwide/U.S.
    - Is disease course different (worse/better/same/variable effects)
    - How effective are current vaccines and other treatments

- How well do current tests detect the variants
  - **Dr Fauci, CDC, researchers actively studying these issues**
  - **Lab studies to date show variants sensitive to vaccines but human data still pending**
  - **Vaccines may need future update or booster** to ensure immunity against new variants; this occurs every year for flu vaccine and is well established practice for drug makers
  - Moderna already developing update to address variants for future doses
  - Fortunately, **mRNA technology allows very easy, rapid and safe modifications**
- Eli Lilly neutralizing antibody drug (bamlanivimab) shows dramatic reduction of severe disease
  - EUA for treatment but not yet for prevention
    - As prophylactic drug = 80% reduced infections in 8 weeks
- **“Long COVID”** – 20% recovered patients still symptomatic at 5 weeks; 10% at 12 weeks; older age increases risk of prolonged recovery
- Recent UK study showed **indoor likely talking more contagious than coughing**, and adds evidence for restricting public exposure in pubs/bars/restaurants/gyms/salons
- Due to masking, distancing and hygiene practices this year’s **influenza rates are at record lows!**

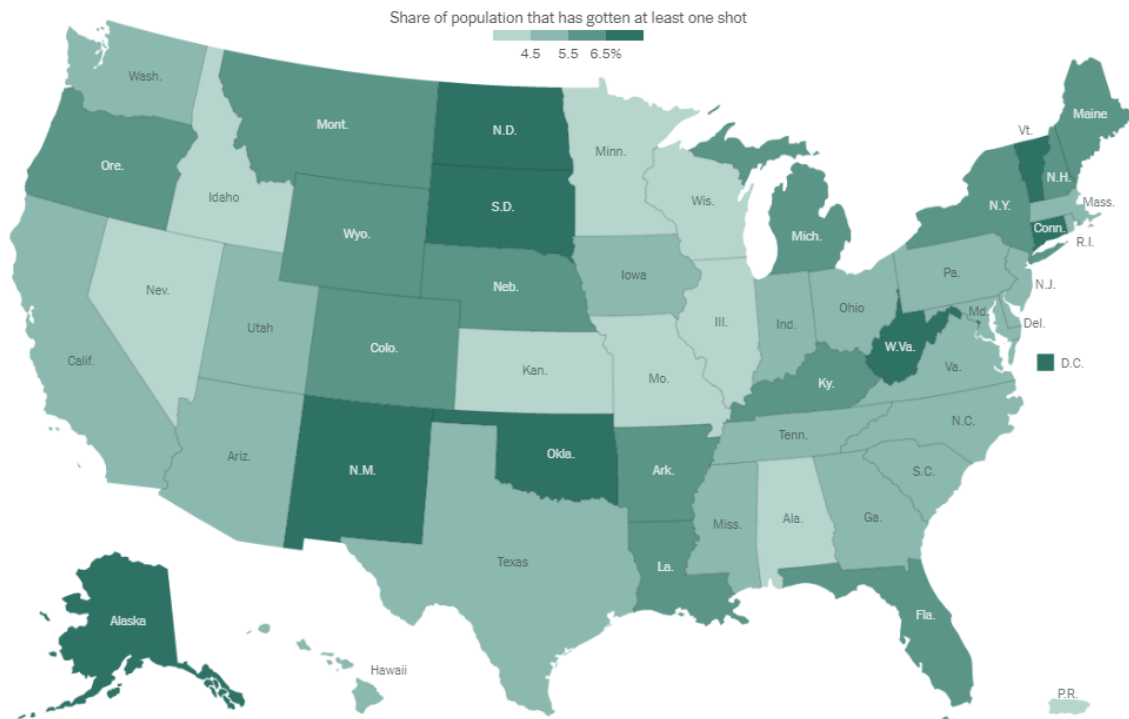
### New Reported Doses Administered by Day



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | Note: Line shows a seven-day average. Data not updated on some weekends and holidays.

# See How the Vaccine Rollout Is Going in Your State

By The New York Times Updated Jan. 24, 2021



The federal [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) said about 18.5 million people have received at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine, and that about 3.2 million people had been fully vaccinated.

## Vaccine News

- **>23M vaccines administered**
  - ~20M 1<sup>st</sup> dose and 3.5 M both doses
- **Moderna – severe allergic reaction** in only 2.5 per 1 million; **Pfizer** only 11 per 1 million
  - **No deaths reported** and responded to epinephrine (EpiPen)
- CDC announced option for up to 6 week delay between doses without reduced effectiveness
  - Under “exceptional situations” two vaccines doses can be mixed if >28 day between
- **Israel has vaccinated >40% population and has seen dramatic reductions in new cases** ( $R_0 < 1$ , which means each infected patient transmits COVID-19 to less than 1 other person, effectively allowing control of the pandemic as long as new variants also covered by vaccine)

- **Johnson & Johnson** announces vaccine candidate requiring only 1 dose and **Novavax** announces candidate only requiring normal refrigeration – more options likely to be approved soon to increase supply
- **Merck announced two vaccine candidates were eliminated** from their pipeline due to clinical trial data showing poor effectiveness. This proof should provide everyone even more confidence in the FDA vaccine approval system and in the safety of the currently approved vaccines that met the necessary standards and thresholds.
- **Vaccine confidence is rising!** 69% in latest survey were planning or already been vaccinated
- **Addressing vaccine hesitancy** will also be a priority of the Biden administration and will be done through what he called a "massive public education campaign to rebuild that trust, to help people understand what science tells us — that vaccines help reduce the risk of COVID infections."
- - **QualDerm employees currently >50% vaccinated or planning to do so**
  - Likely due to reports of no significant safety issues
  - Hesitancy remains highest among minorities and younger, especially females
  - Obstetric medical societies continue to recommend vaccination
    - Vanderbilt University Maternal Fetal Medicine physician discusses below:
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=f3LLSBVPk4k&list=PLucLRYfUxMGianhYMePL8EjysIdPJxQ7z&index=8&t=534s>
  - **Dina Gluck Dermatology Nurse Practitioner** from TN has generously shared the following message and offered to connect with any QDP employee interested in discussing her **experience of currently being pregnant and deciding on vaccination.**

Hi Dr. Albertini,

Thanks for all the updates over the last year and specifically the ones regarding the vaccine. I have enjoyed reading them. Just wanted to share with you that I am an NP with our TN practices and I am 34 weeks pregnant... I got my first dose of the Pfizer vaccine in January 2nd at 32 weeks pregnant and will get my booster next week. Baby is doing great and I have had no side effects thus far. I was fortunate to have the guidance of a few OB/gyns but also a personal friend who happens to be on the CDC ACIP for the moderna vaccine and she shared with me a wealth of knowledge that eased my decision. I am happy to share some of this information with anyone that may reach out to you with questions if they are pregnant and have concerns! It was helpful for me to find comfort in numbers of other pregnant HCWs choosing to be vaccinated so if I can help anyone else I would be glad to.

Thanks,

Dina Gluck

- [NEJM — Covid-19 Vaccine Resources](#)

**Advanced Practice Providers** – With the input and approval of our Quality Council subcommittee led by Dr Julie Countess of TN, QualDerm Partners has recently transitioned the terminology for our outstanding group of non-physician dermatology providers, in accordance with current preferences by these licensed Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners. We will no longer refer to them as NPPs or Non-Physician Providers in lieu of the more appropriate, current and accurate name of **Advanced Practice Providers or APPs**. We so appreciate all of them and the tremendous quality care they provide!

As always, continue to take good care of yourselves, your teammates and your families and patients. Stay safe and be smart and we will get through this last phase and move on to much better times in 2021! Please continue to send your questions, suggestions or comments to [health@qualderm.com](mailto:health@qualderm.com).

Sincerely,

Dr A