

Pfizer CEO Says Omicron-Targeted Vaccine is Most Likely Outcome



Pfizer Inc Chief Executive Albert Bourla said a redesigned COVID-19 vaccine that specifically targets the Omicron coronavirus variant is likely needed and his company could have one ready to launch by March.

Bourla said Pfizer and partner BioNTech SE are working on both an Omicron-targeted vaccine version as well as a shot that would include both the previous vaccine as well as one targeted at the fast-spreading variant.

"I think it is the most likely scenario," Bourla said, speaking at J.P. Morgan's annual healthcare conference, which is being held virtually this year. "We're working on higher doses. We're working different schedules. We're doing a lot of things right now, as we speak."

Bourla said Pfizer could be ready to file for U.S. regulatory approval for a redesigned vaccine and launch it as soon as March. Bourla said Pfizer has built up so much manufacturing capacity for the vaccine that it will not be a problem to switch immediately.

COVID-19 vaccines eventually could be an annual shot for most people, Bourla said, and some high-risk groups might be eligible to receive the shots more often than that.

Moderna Inc ([MRNA.O](#)) CEO Stephane Bancel said last week that people could need another shot this fall, as the efficacy of boosters is likely to decline over the next few months.

An Omicron-driven spike in COVID-19 cases has forced some nations to look to another booster dose, but early signs suggest repeat vaccination [may be a hard sell](#).

Pfizer earlier in the day announced three deals to broaden the use of the messenger RNA technology (mRNA) that its COVID-19 vaccine was based on, including a pact worth as much as \$1.35 billion with gene-editing specialist Beam Therapeutics ([BEAM.O](#)).

The U.S. drugmaker has been looking to advance the development of mRNA-based vaccines and therapeutics after it led global efforts to develop a COVID-19 shot against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The company will also collaborate with Codex DNA Inc ([DNAY.O](#)) to leverage the biotech's proprietary technology, which could enable more efficient development of mRNA-based vaccines, therapeutics and other biopharma products.

Its deal with private biotech Acuitas Therapeutics will focus on the use of the Vancouver-based company's lipid nanoparticle technology for developing up to 10 vaccines or therapeutics.

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