

Top U.S. doctor says vaccination key to fighting COVID-19 variants



Dr Anthony Fauci says the best defence is to get as many people vaccinated as quickly as possible. (Photo: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters)

Washington, February 9 (RHC)-- Amid rising concerns over emerging variant strains of COVID-19, top infectious disease doctor Anthony Fauci said the best defence is to get as many people vaccinated, as

quickly as possible. Fauci said while it is reasonable to consider studying the efficacy of giving only one dose of the Pfizer's and Moderna's vaccines – in light of concerns over limited supplies – such a study would take months to complete and thus likely make its conclusions moot.

The optimal “approach would be to continue with getting as many people on their first dose as possible but also making sure that people on time get their second dose,” Fauci said during a news briefing. “It’s an incentive to do what we have been saying all along: to vaccinate as many people as we can and to do so as quickly as we can,” he said.

The White House coronavirus task force has said the United States is currently vaccinating an average of 1.3 million people every day, and that the majority of Americans would need to be vaccinated to stop the spread of COVID-19 infections.

In an interview with CBS News, U.S. President Joe Biden, who took office on January 20, said he realised his predecessor's administration's handling of the pandemic was “even more dire than we thought” only after he entered the White House. “We thought they had indicated there was a lot more vaccine available,” Biden said. “And that didn't turn out to be the case. So that's why we've ramped up every way we can,” he said.

Also crucial has been the issue of reopening schools, which Biden called “a national emergency” that some 20 million American children have been learning remotely for nearly an entire year. Biden had pledged to prioritise the reopening of schools during his first 100 days in office.

“I think it's time for schools to reopen safely. Safely,” Biden said during the CBS interview. “You have to have fewer people in the classroom. You have to have ventilation systems that have been reworked.” He said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) would this week release requirements to safely reopen schools.

But the prospects of reopening schools is already fraught with problems, with teachers' unions threatening to strike if they are compelled to return to classrooms before it is deemed safe.

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