

Pfizer vaccine receives FDA approval, earns new name

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(Photo by Jens Schlueter/Getty Images)

SAN ANTONIO – Following the Food and Drug Administration’s approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, Pfizer-BioNTech has announced the new market name for its vaccine: Comirnaty.

Comirnaty is the first COVID-19 vaccine to be approved by the FDA. It has been approved for all individuals 16 years of age and older. It is hoped that this will remove a hurdle for those who have remained hesitant to receive the vaccine. For individuals between the ages of 12 and 15, and those who are immunocompromised, the Pfizer vaccine under the Emergency Use Authorization will still be available.

Comirnaty's safety was evaluated by researchers using 44,000 individuals 16 years of age or older; half were given the vaccine while the other half received a placebo. Clinical trials showed a 91% effectiveness in preventing COVID-19 disease.

Interim executive director of The Immunization Partnership, Hill Powell, says, "This a big step forward in our fight to control the spread of COVID-19. We often hear people say they will have more confidence in the vaccine and be more willing to get vaccinated if the FDA approved it. Well, now it's approved, and we hope this will help those who are hesitant to get vaccinated as soon as possible."

The FDA's approval of Comirnaty comes as Texas hospitals have been seeing an increase in the number of children with COVID-19. "Texas Children's Hospital currently has over 60 pediatric patients hospitalized with COVID, and we know that approximately 10% of our pediatric intensive care unit beds have been occupied by COVID-19 patients during the recent days of the Delta surge," says Lindy McGee, MD, an assistant professor at Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, and a member of The Immunization Partnership Board of Directors and Scientific Advisory Council. "We need everyone who can get the vaccine to get the vaccine now, not only for themselves, but also for those who cannot get it, like the children we are seeing in the hospitals all across Texas."

According to Powell, vaccines alone are insufficient on their own. "We need to follow the guidance of our local public health experts who say we all need to wear masks in public spaces, to continue practicing social distancing, and to make sure we wash our hands thoroughly. The FDA's approval of the Pfizer vaccine is a big step, but it's not the only step. We all need to do our part for each other and for our communities."