

Why Moderna's vaccine appears to be significantly superior to the Pfizer-BioNTech shot

Unlike Pfizer's vaccine, Moderna's shot can be stored at normal fridge temperatures, which should make it easier to distribute, a critical factor as COVID-19 cases are soaring, hitting new records in the United States and pushing some European countries back into lockdowns.

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Pfizer's vaccine must be shipped and stored at -70C, the sort of temperature typical of an Antarctic winter. It can be stored for up to five days at standard refrigerator temperatures, or for up to 15 days in a thermal shipping box.

The data from Moderna's trial involving 30,000 volunteers also showed the vaccine prevented cases of severe COVID-19, a question that still remains with the Pfizer vaccine. Of the 95 cases in Moderna's trial, 11 were severe and all 11 occurred among volunteers who got the placebo.

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Moderna, part of the U.S. government's Operation Warp Speed program, expects to produce about 20 million doses for the United States this year, millions of which the company has already made and is ready to ship if it gets FDA authorization.

"Assuming we get an emergency use authorization, we'll be ready to ship through Warp Speed almost in hours," [Moderna president Stephen] Hoge said. "So it could start being distributed instantly."

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