

# NEWS BRIEF

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## **Merck and Johnson & Johnson Partner to Accelerate COVID-19 Vaccine Production**

The White House recently [announced](#) that drugmaker Merck & Co., will help produce competitor Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine to expand its production and supply.

President Joe Biden's administration will play a key role in this partnership. The administration has invoked the Defense Production Act to get two Merck facilities up to the standards necessary to safely manufacture the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. While it will take months to fully equip these plants, Merck has extensive experience and capacity as a vaccine producer and is prepared to use these two facilities to vastly increase supply.

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*This partnership comes days after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued an emergency use authorization for Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine.*

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Federal officials have, for weeks, been concerned about Johnson & Johnson's progress in manufacturing their vaccine. While the company and its contractors are moving to round-the-clock production, increasing staffing to deal with machinery breakdowns and partnering with the U.S. Department of Defense for logistical help, the Biden administration still worries that improvements aren't taking place fast enough.

Though Johnson & Johnson has faced challenges, the company says it is on pace to produce 100 million vaccines by the end of June.

### **What's Next for COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution**

According to the White House, states will be receiving 2.8 million doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine in the first week of March. Additionally, the federal government will increase the weekly supply of other authorized vaccines to states from 14.5 million to 15.2 million doses.

These increases in supply are part of the Biden administration's goal to have a vaccine available to all adults in the United States by the end of May.

Vaccines are still only available to select groups, such as health care workers and those in high-risk categories. Employers should continue to monitor updates from local officials for vaccine availability.

