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Inside C2

# Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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## Wall St books records, weekly gains on strong jobs report, Pfizer COVID-19 pill cheer

Nov 5 (Reuters) - Wall Street's main indexes scored record closing highs on Friday and booked solid gains for the week following a strong U.S. jobs report and positive data for Pfizer's experimental pill against COVID-19.

The S&P 500 and the Nasdaq notched record high closes for their seventh straight sessions, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average also closed at a record. All three indexes posted weekly gains for their fifth straight weeks.

The Labor Department report showed U.S. employment increased more than expected in October as the headwind from the surge in COVID-19 infections over the summer subsided. read more

A trial of Pfizer Inc's (PFE.N) experimental antiviral pill for COVID-19 was stopped early after the drug was shown to cut by 89% the chances of hospitalization or death for adults at risk of developing severe disease. Pfizer shares jumped about 11%. read more

The news kept the run going for equities after investors earlier in the week digested the Federal Reserve's decision to start reducing its monthly bond purchases put in place to support the economy.

"Momentum that we have seen this week has continued, and the jobs report and the Pfizer announcement certainly are providing positive datapoints for investors to put more money into the market right now," said Chuck Carlson, chief executive officer at Horizon Investment Services in Hammond, Indiana.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average (.DJI) rose 203.72 points, or 0.56%, to 36,327.95, the S&P 500 (.SPX) gained 17.47 points, or 0.37%, to 4,697.53 and the Nasdaq Composite (.IXIC) added 31.28 points, or 0.2%, to 15,971.59.

For the week, the S&P 500 rose 2%, the Dow added 1.42%, while the Nasdaq gained 3.05%.

Travel stocks rose following Pfizer's announcement, with the S&P 1500 airlines index (.SPCOMAIR) climbing 7%, and cruise operators Carnival Corp (CCL.N), Royal Caribbean Cruises (RCL.N) and Norwegian



Cruise (NCLH.N) rising between about 8% to 9%.



Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City, U.S., October 20, 2021. REUTERS/Brendan McDermid  
Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City, U.S., October 20, 2021. REUTERS/Brendan McDermid  
"Still early to be definitive but this (pill) looks like a true game changer for many industries like leisure and transporta-

tion, you're seeing it reflected in the prices," said Andre Bakhos, managing director at New Vines Capital LLC in Bernardsville, New Jersey.

Among S&P 500 sectors, energy (.SPNY) and industrials (.SPLRCI) led the way, rising 1.4% and 1%, respectively.

Healthcare (.SPXHC) was the only sector that ended negative, falling 1%. The Pfizer news weighed on shares of competitors such as Merck (MRK.N), which fell nearly 10%, and COVID-19 vaccine makers such as Moderna (MRNA.O), which slumped 16.6%.

Shares of so-called "stay-at-home" names fell, with Zoom Video Communications (ZM.O) down 6.2% and Netflix Inc (NFLX.O) off 3.4%.

Better-than-expected third-quarter earnings have helped lift sentiment for equities. With about 440 companies having reported, S&P 500 earnings are expected to have climbed 41.5% in the third quarter from a year earlier, according to Refinitiv IBES.

Pinterest Inc (PINS.N) shares climbed 5.9% after the company's strong fourth-quarter revenue forecast. read more

Peloton Interactive Inc (PTON.O) shares slumped 35.3% after the company slashed its full-year sales forecast by up to \$1 billion. read more

Advancing issues outnumbered declining ones on the NYSE by a 2.16-to-1 ratio; on Nasdaq, a 1.22-to-1 ratio favored advancers.

The S&P 500 posted 83 new 52-week highs and two new lows; the Nasdaq Composite recorded 303 new highs and 80 new lows.

About 11.5 billion shares changed hands in U.S. exchanges, compared with the 10.5 billion daily average over the last 20 sessions.



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# Visibility deteriorates as pollution cloaks China's capital

BEIJING, Nov 5 (Reuters) - Visibility in parts of Beijing was less than 200 metres (219 yards) on Friday as heavy pollution shrouded the Chinese capital, forcing the closure of some highways.

Beijing issued its first heavy pollution alert for the fall and winter on Thursday, requiring the suspension of some outdoor construction, factory operations and outdoor school activities.

Visibility has been severely limited with the top of the city's tallest buildings vanishing in the haze.

The heavily industrialised Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region often suffers from heavy smog in the fall and winter, especially on days without wind.

A cold wave arriving from Siberia over the weekend is expected to disperse the pollution.

China aims to cut concentrations of hazardous, small airborne particles known as PM2.5 by an average of 4% year on year in main cities this winter, the environment ministry said last month.

The PM2.5 level in urban areas reached as high as 234 micrograms per cubic metre on Friday, according to the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, indicating very unhealthy air.

China's overall 2021-22 winter campaign against pollution will be waged in as many as 64 cities throughout the industrialised, smog-prone north, the ministry said in September.

China is due to host the Winter Olympics in Beijing and the nearby city of Zhangjiakou on Feb. 4-20.



People overlook the skyline of the Central Business District on a polluted day in Beijing, China, November 5, 2021. REUTERS/Thomas Peter

## Guangzhou, Shenzhen told to allocate 10% of land for affordable rental homes

BEIJING, Nov 5 (Reuters) - China's most populous province Guangdong said on Friday that its two biggest metropolises Guangzhou and Shenzhen must allocate at least 10% of their land for rental housing to meet rising demand for homes especially among the young.

Under proposed new rules, rental housing will focus on the development of homes no larger than 70 square metres in area for new residents and young people. Additionally, the rents they pay must be lower than the rents of other properties in

their neighbourhood, the Guangdong government said in a document. Guangdong's population has soared in the past decade to 126 million as the likes of tech giants such as Huawei and Tencent based in the southern province attract people from other provinces seeking high-paying jobs.

New home prices in Guangdong have soared in line with its growing population and economy, putting pressure on lower-income groups including fresh graduates with entry-level

salaries.

In August, Guangdong said it will build 740,500 units of rental housing in 2021-2025, with 222,000 to be completed this year.

Besides Guangzhou and Shenzhen, rental housing projects will also be a focus for major cities in the heavily industrialised Pearl River Delta including Zhuhai, Foshan, Dongguan and Zhongshan.

New home prices in Shenzhen, China's Silicon Valley, averaged 55,000 yuan per square metre in October, the most costly among the 100 cities tracked by China Index Academy, one of the country's largest independent real estate research firms.

## Editor's Choice



A reporter raises their hand to ask a question as U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi holds her weekly news conference at the U.S. Capitol in Washington. REUTERS/Jonathan Ernst



Men push a car from a gas station ransacked by people angry after the station refused to distribute fuel amid a nationwide shortage, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. REUTERS/Ralph Tedy Erol



A woman and her son hold firecrackers during Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, in Mumbai, India. REUTERS/Francis Macarenhas



A surfer takes to the waves about a month after an oil spill closed Huntington Beach, California. REUTERS/David Swanson



An image of U.S. President Joe Biden burns during the 42nd anniversary of the U.S. expulsion from Iran, in Tehran, Iran. Majid Asgaripour/WANA



A patient sits in a wheelchair while receiving oxygen through a mask in the COVID-19 ER unit at Giurgiu County Emergency Hospital, in Giurgiu, Romania. Inquam Photos/Octav Ganea

# Booster Shots Are Coming. Will You Need One?



The U.S. is preparing for COVID-19 vaccine booster shots, though exactly who needs one is not entirely clear. (Photo/Emily Elconin/Getty Images)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

For the past several weeks, Dr. Boghuma Titanji has been swamped with questions about COVID-19 vaccine boosters. Even the experts seem confused, she says.

"I'm even getting questions from my colleagues, who are doctors, asking me, 'What should I do?'" says the infectious disease specialist at Emory University.

The messaging from public health officials has flip-flopped so much, she says, that it has created a mess. "How is anyone supposed to navigate all this information?" Titanji says. "It's a lot."

The messaging mayhem began last month, when the Biden administration, along with the White House's chief medical adviser, Dr. Anthony Fauci, said it wanted to roll out booster shots for all adults about eight months after their initial course of an mRNA vaccine. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy and the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, spoke in support of the plan.

But then just last week, some scientists with the Food and Drug Administration published a review in *The Lancet* outlining why boosters for the general public are not needed.

And Wednesday, when the FDA finally did authorize the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine booster, it was only for certain adults — those over 65 and others at high risk of severe COVID-19 — at least six months after their last dose. After a contentious debate within its advisory committee, the CDC backed this plan and spelled out more detail about who should get the shot and who may only want to consider getting one.

All these twists and turns and conflicting views have left a lot of people confused. Whom should they listen to? Do we need a booster shot or not? What does the science actually say? Who needs boosters most urgently?

There's a lot of agreement about two groups that will benefit most from getting another vaccine dose.

If you're immunocompromised or can't mount a strong immune response to the vaccine, you need a third shot of the mRNA vaccines to protect against severe disease or hospitalization. The FDA already authorized this extra shot back in August. And, Titanji says, the science is clear: "This group of people might not have mounted an appropriate immune response after the first two doses of the vaccine," she says. "So they will benefit from a third shot."



**COVID-19 vaccine boosters are needed for people with suppressed immune systems, like Mark Turney, 66, a kidney transplant patient who got his Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 booster shot at Hartford Hospital in Hartford, Conn. (Photo/Joseph Prezioso/AFP via Getty Images)**

The second group is adults over 65. Both the FDA and a CDC advisory committee that met Thursday gave a thumbs-up to this group getting boosters. Several studies have shown that for older people, protection against severe COVID-19 wanes a bit over time.

It's not a lot. But the concern is that the efficacy will decrease more and more over time.

For instance, the CDC reported Wednesday that, for people over 65, protection against hospitalization has dropped from about 85% to 70% in the past six months for the Pfizer vaccine and from about 90% to 85% for the Moderna vaccine.

"People over 65 have an increased risk of developing severe infections, which would land them in the hospital," Titanji says. "The farther out they are from their second dose, the larger this risk grows. So this group also stands to benefit from an additional dose."

**What about people with underlying conditions?**

The FDA OK'd the Pfizer booster for anyone "at high risk of severe COVID-19."

Theoretically, this could include anyone with certain underlying conditions, such as diabetes or chronic lung disease, that put the person at higher risk of getting a really bad case of COVID-19. The CDC recommended that people 50 to 64 years old with underlying conditions get a booster. But it's optional for younger adults. They should assess their risks and possibly consult with a doctor before getting a booster.

Data presented at the CDC's advisory panel suggests that vaccine effectiveness may have waned slightly for adults with underlying conditions, though the data is preliminary. A study from the United Kingdom showed that waning is the greatest in older people (those over 64) who have medical conditions that put them at high risk for severe COVID-19, including transplant recipients, cancer patients and people with severe heart and lung disease.

**So, if I'm healthy and young (that is, under 65), do I need a booster right now? I am worried about the delta variant and want the best protection I can get.**

Given the mixed messages from the government, some younger, healthy people may be tempted to just go see if they can get a booster. In fact, some people have already been doing that. But there's plenty of evidence that you don't need to.



Scientists recommend a booster shot when there's convincing evidence that the initial doses of the vaccine don't offer enough protection.

Several studies recently have shown that, for the mRNA vaccines, the opposite is true for healthy adults: The vaccines are actually still working quite well, even against the delta variant.

For instance, data from the CDC, presented Wednesday, shows that the ability of the mRNA vaccines to prevent severe disease hasn't changed significantly in the past six months. Both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines give more than 90% protection for people under 65.

"In the younger population, without comorbidities or additional risk factors, the vaccines continue to offer robust protection against severe disease," Titanji says.

Now, when it comes to preventing mild to moderate illness, there has been some waning protection. The ability of these vaccines to prevent

symptomatic infections has dropped during the past six months, this CDC data shows. For Pfizer, it has dropped from more than 90% to about 65%, and for Moderna, it has dropped from more than 90% to about 75%.

So a booster shot may offer a little extra protection against getting sick and having to stay home to recover, says immunologist Deeptha Bhattacharya at the University of Arizona, but it's still unknown how long this extra protection will last. And it isn't going to change your risk of dying or ending up in the hospital.

"The question sort of becomes, when do we need a booster versus when do we want one," Bhattacharya says. "I think that's the distinction we need to have right now. Getting a booster to stop a cold or mild flu-like illness, that's a different thing than worrying about whether or not you might survive the illness."

**Bottom line?** Two doses of the mRNA vaccines are actually still working as intended, says microbiologist Maria Elena Bottazzi at Baylor College of Medicine.

"We also have to remember these vaccines were designed and authorized to make sure they reduce very severe disease and deaths," she says.

**Are boosters safe, especially for younger adults and teens?**

Right now, there's very little direct data to answer this question, Titanji says. Last week, Pfizer presented data on about 300 patients, all adults age 18 and above. "These are quite small numbers," she says.



That said, scientists expect the booster's safety profile will be close to that of the original course of the vaccine, she says. "When you look at how safe the first and the second doses of the vaccines have been, I have the inclination to think that even the third dose would continue to be quite safe," Titanji says. "But if you're rolling it out as a policy that then extends to millions of people, you need to show that the safety continues to hold up."

In particular, there's concern that a booster shot could increase some of the serious side effects observed for the original course of the vaccination, including heart inflammation (myocarditis) and Guillain-Barré syndrome, which are both triggered by the immune response.

Both side effects are extremely rare. For instance, the rate of myocarditis is about 40 in a million males vaccinated between ages 12 and 29, the CDC reports. But the rate is the highest in males ages 12 to 17. And yet, Pfizer hasn't presented any safety data for teenagers under 18, says epidemiologist Natalie Dean at Emory University. "Because there's so much hesitancy around vaccination, I think we should make sure we have the data for this age group before a decision is

made," Dean says. "I just don't understand the value of rushing that decision, especially given that the risk of severe disease is relatively low for this population."

**Could there be any advantage to waiting to get the booster?**

Possibly, if you're healthy and under 65. Here's why. Right now the only booster available uses the same variant of the virus as the one found in the first two doses of the vaccine — that is, the booster shot encodes for a piece of the original variant of SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes the disease COVID-19.

But that's not the variant causing the surge in the U.S., nor is it the variant that will likely cause future surges. Some scientists, including those on the FDA's advisory committee, have brought up the question of whether it might be better to wait for a booster designed against a variant or multiple variants, which is known as a multivalent vaccine.

The goal is to train the immune system to recognize and attack any future variant that might arise.

"That's definitely the future of COVID vaccines," says Bottazzi, of Baylor College of Medicine. "In fact, our vaccine center is focusing on developing a multivalent vaccine to see if we can increase the broadness of the immune response."



Last week, Moderna published findings from a study on a bivalent booster shot that contains mRNA from both the beta variant and the original version of SARS-CoV-2. In the small study with only 80 people, the bivalent booster shot elevated antibody levels about 46-fold, on average. By comparison, a booster with either just the original variant or just the beta variant boosted levels only 17- or 11-fold, the company reported in *Nature Medicine*.

**What if I'm young and healthy but work in health care or other front-line professions like teaching?**

The FDA did authorize the Pfizer booster shot for people with "frequent institutional or occupational exposure" to the coronavirus, which could put them at higher risk of getting a severe case of COVID-19. This group includes health care workers, teachers and other front-line workers. The CDC says this group "may" want a booster and should consider their individual situation and risk level.

This recommendation has been contentious because recent data from the CDC shows the vaccines holding up well against severe disease among this group.

But giving these workers a little extra protection from any infection may help society as a whole, advisers to the FDA noted on Friday.

"They may have a breakthrough infection that doesn't necessarily land them in the hospital, but it would take them away from work at a time when they're needed to respond to a pandemic," says Titanji, of Emory University. (Courtesy npr.org)

# These States Are Seeing A Huge Rise In Delta Hospitalizations



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

COVID-19 hospitalizations have hit 100,000 for the first time since January. Doctors are staging walkouts. Nurses are exhausted. Look past the headlines and you will see more and more Americans dying or hospitalized due to severe disease caused by the Delta variant of the coronavirus. If you felt invincible last year, please reconsider. "I think most of us thought once we got through the winter or people started getting vaccinated, we said, Okay, the worst is behind us. We're not going to deal with this again," virus expert Ashish Jha told *Good Morning America*. That didn't happen because "we never expected that a third of Americans would opt not to get vaccinated." As a result, the following 5 states have hospitals overflowing; one is even begging tourists not to come.

## 1. Oregon



"Every day we see just the body boxes roll out one after the other and then

as soon as we clean the room we get somebody back in there... It's the worst we've ever seen." That's what ICU nurse Clarissa Carson told CBS News' Janet Shamlian Wednesday at Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center in Medford, Oregon, where COVID-19 patients have filled the hospital," reports CBS News. "Shamlian reported constant turnover in the hospital's intensive care unit, but not because patients are getting better." "We have patients waiting to get onto life support," ICU Dr. Somnath Ghosh said. "The turnaround is so rapid, it's pretty sad."

## 2. Illinois



"Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker has reinstated a mask mandate for the state, requiring masks indoors for residents as he says the state is 'running out of time as our hospitals run out of beds,'" reports 5 Chicago. "The new indoor mask mandate, similar to mandates already handed down in Cook County and Chicago,

will begin Monday and require facial coverings in indoor settings, regardless of COVID vaccination status." "Illinois will join several other states that have reinstated statewide indoor mask requirements, regardless of vaccination status, effective on Monday," Pritzker said. "Masks work. Period."

## 3. Florida



Florida has the most people hospitalized at more than 17,000. "South Florida COVID patients are filling ICU beds at rates not seen before. A new dashboard released by Palm Beach County Thursday reveals that only 4% of ICU beds in its 17 hospitals are available. In Broward County, only 3% of ICU beds at its 16 hospitals are available, its dashboard shows," reports the Sun Sentinel. "Across the state, the situation is just as bleak. With COVID patients getting sicker and many on ventilators, only 5% of intensive care beds are open to new patients, according to the U.S. Health and Human Services data."

## 4. Texas



Texas has 14,000-plus people hospitalized with COVID. "As the highly contagious delta variant of COVID-19 spreads and sends unvaccinated Tex-

ans to the hospital with serious illness, hospitals are under enormous pressure to make room for growing numbers of patients," reports the Texas Tribune. "Hospital staff has never been in shorter supply, which deepens the strain on all departments, including emergency rooms, respiratory therapy and even labor and delivery. Without the capacity to



take on new patients — and equally thin resources elsewhere to transfer them to — doctors fear they'll have to start making heartbreaking decisions about care in order to save the most lives possible."

## 5. New Mexico



"New Mexico's Democratic Governor Michelle Grisham has announced a temporary indoor mask mandate following a 90 percent increase in statewide COVID-19 hospitalizations over the

last two weeks," reports *Newsweek*. "In addition to the mandate, Grisham announced mandatory vaccinations for all personnel working in care settings and schools." "We can't continue our economic recovery and our positive economic journey if we have out of control COVID cases in the state of New Mexico," Grisham said. "We're gonna use masks and vaccines to blunt the spread of COVID and see if we can't rebalance where we are as a state, particularly given the Delta variant."

Stay Safe Out There!



No matter where you live, follow the public health fundamentals and help end this pandemic, no matter where you live—get vaccinated ASAP; if you live in an area with low vaccination rates, wear an N95 face mask, don't travel, social distance, avoid large crowds, don't go indoors with people you're not shel-

tering with (especially in bars), practice good hand hygiene, and protect your life and the lives of others. COVID. (Courtesy eatthis.com)