

## Top news stories from AMA Morning Rounds®: Week of April 26, 2021

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Read *AMA Morning Rounds®*' most popular stories in medicine and public health from the week of April 26, 2021–April 30, 2021.

### **After safety review, federal health agencies lift pause on use of Johnson & Johnson coronavirus vaccine**

The Washington Post (4/23, A1, Sun) reported on Friday, the CDC and FDA “lifted a pause on the use of the Johnson & Johnson coronavirus vaccine...after an extensive safety review.” The agencies “said the benefits of the single-shot vaccine far outweigh the risks from a rare and severe type of blood clot.”

The New York Times (4/23, Anthes, Zimmer, Weiland) reported the FDA “will add a warning to its label to note the potential risk of rare blood clots.” The agency “noted that most of those who developed the rare clots were women between the ages of 18 and 49, and that the ‘chance of having this occur is remote.’”

CNN (4/23, Fox) reported AMA President Susan R. Bailey, M.D., said, “The AMA will continue to work with the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to ensure physicians and patients are aware of the rare, but increased risk of thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) in women under the age of 50, as well as the appropriate treatment, so they can act quickly.”

**Editor’s Note:** Read the full AMA statement from AMA President Susan R. Bailey, MD.

### **U.S. population grew over past decade at slowest rate since 1930s, Census Bureau says**

The New York Times (4/26, A1, Tavernise, Gebeloff) reports, “Over the past decade, the United States population grew at the slowest rate since the 1930s, the Census Bureau reported on Monday, a remarkable slackening that was driven by a leveling off of immigration and a declining birthrate.” The Census Bureau also announced the population continued to shift west and south.

## **Fully vaccinated people can go without masks outdoors, except in crowded settings, CDC says**

The Washington Post (4/27, A1, Sun) reports, “Federal health officials said Tuesday that fully vaccinated people can go without masks outdoors when walking, jogging or biking, or dining with friends at outdoor restaurants—a milestone development for tens of millions of pandemic-weary Americans after more than a year of masking up and locking down.” And “President Biden touted the relaxation of restrictions as another reason for people to get vaccinated, urging them to move forward not just to protect themselves and those around them, but so they can live more normally.”

The New York Times (4/27, Rabin, Anthes, Stolberg) reports that “the risk of the virus spreading outdoors is so low that even unvaccinated individuals do not need to wear a mask if they hike, jog, bike or run alone or with a household member, according to the CDC’s updated advice,” and “people who haven’t gotten their shots can also go without a mask to small gatherings held outside as long as they are with fully vaccinated friends and family.” The agency “stopped short of telling even fully vaccinated people that they could shed their masks altogether in outdoor settings—citing the worrying risk that remains for transmitting the coronavirus, unknown vaccination levels among people in crowds and the still-high caseloads in some regions of the country.”

The AP (4/27, Stobbe) reports that CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky “said the decision was driven by rising vaccination numbers; declines in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths; and research showing that less than 10% of documented instances of transmission of the virus happened outdoors.”

## **Seniors who received Pfizer, Moderna COVID-19 vaccines 94% less likely to require hospitalization, CDC study indicates**

The Washington Post (4/28, Sun) reports CDC researchers concluded both the Pfizer-BioNTech and the Moderna COVID-19 vaccines “are highly effective in preventing hospitalizations among older adults, the group most at risk for severe disease and death.” In the CDC study, “fully vaccinated adults 65 and older were 94% less likely to be hospitalized with [COVID-19] than people of the same

age who were not vaccinated.”

The New York Times (4/28, Anthes) reports the researchers also found seniors who had only “received one dose of the vaccine more than two weeks prior...were 64% less likely to be hospitalized with the coronavirus than unvaccinated seniors.” CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said in a statement, “These findings are encouraging and welcome news for the two-thirds of people aged 65 and up who are already fully vaccinated.”

## **FDA promises to issue new rules within a year banning menthol in tobacco products**

The Washington Post (4/29, Bernstein) reports on Thursday, the FDA promised “to issue new rules within a year that would ban menthol in cigarettes and small cigars—a longtime goal of civil rights and anti-tobacco groups, who say aggressive marketing of the products has disproportionately harmed Black communities.” The agency’s “move would also ban flavorings in cigars, which are popular with young people.”

The New York Times (4/29, Kaplan) reports, “The ban would apply only to sales, manufacturing and imports—not personal possession.” The announcement followed a citizen petition calling for such a ban, and a subsequent lawsuit resulting in a court order mandating the agency respond to the petition. The AMA and other medical groups joined the lawsuit.

USA Today (4/28, Collins, Hassanein) reports many supporters of the ban say tobacco companies have targeted Black Americans in their marketing of tobacco products with menthol.

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