

CDC vaccine panel to hold emergency meeting next week on J&J vaccine

By Erin Banco

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's vaccine advisory committee will hold an emergency meeting on April 23 to review additional data from Johnson & Johnson and the Biden administration on rare and severe blood clotting events that may be linked to the company's vaccine.

The panel, known as the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, first met Wednesday to review information on the known clotting cases after the administration recommended Tuesday that the U.S. pause use of the J&J shot. Six women between the ages of 18 and 48 developed a condition called cerebral venous sinus thrombosis — or severe blood clotting in the brain — and low platelet counts after vaccination.

The committee was considering making a decision on whether to restrict eligibility to certain portions of the population, namely women 18-48. But members decided they did not have enough information to make a decision either way.

Why it matters: The pause comes as the Biden administration is in the middle of trying to ramp up vaccinations across the country and Covid-19 case counts continue to rise in states such as Michigan and New Jersey.

States across the country have canceled or postponed thousands of appointments for Americans who were previously scheduled to receive the J&J vaccine. Local officials are hoping to fill the gap by tapping their stocks of Covid-19 vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna. Some are worried that the pause will increase vaccine hesitancy overall, just as the country's vaccination effort has begun averaging more than 3 million shots per day.

What's next: The administration is now working to gather additional data from J&J about the scale of the blood clotting issue and to determine whether there are other individuals who experienced blood clotting post vaccination but did not report it.

ACIP has yet to publish an agenda for next week's meeting and it is unclear whether the committee will make a final call on whether the Biden administration should lift the pause.