

**FLORIDA**

## Medical experts reject Florida surgeon general's Covid-19 vaccine guidance

Ladapo said during a Tuesday night interview that he stands by his recommendation.



Florida Surgeon Gen. Joseph Ladapo before a bill signing by Gov. Ron DeSantis, Nov. 18, 2021, in Brandon, Fla. | Chris O'Meara/AP Photo

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By **AREK SARKISSIAN**

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TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Florida's surgeon general faced major blowback from the medical community after warning men against taking the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna Covid-19 vaccines and highlighting an analysis claiming the shots increase the risk of cardiac-related deaths.

The guidance from Joseph A. Ladapo even prompted Twitter to temporarily block a social media post from the surgeon general promoting the analysis, though the social media company restored it.

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Daniel Salmon, director of the Institute for Vaccine Safety at Johns Hopkins University, said Ladapo's recommendations go against guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and American Academy of Pediatrics. Other agencies or medical associations, including the Food and Drug Administration and Mayo Clinic, have also emphasized that the vaccines are safe and effective.

“It looks to me like this is politics driving science,” Salmon said on Tuesday. “And the result is you get terrible science.”

U.S. Health and Human Services Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Sarah Lovenheim called Ladapo's analysis flawed and a far cry from science.

“COVID-19 vaccines have been proven safe and effective, and severe adverse reactions are rare,” Lovenheim wrote in a statement. “The benefits of COVID-19 vaccination — preventing death and hospitalization — are well-established and continue to outweigh any potential risks.”

Ladapo claims his analysis was based on a Florida Department of Health study showing an 84 percent increase in cardiac related deaths among men aged 18 to 39 years old within 28 days of becoming vaccinated through mRNA vaccines. Yet the medical community rejected the analysis Ladapo promoted.

“I try to give a balanced discussion of what the benefits are of vaccination, what are the risks?” Jason Salemi, associate professor of epidemiology at the University of South Florida College of Public Health, said. “And not just the vaccine itself, but certainly of Covid, and that’s what I don’t see here.”

Ladapo’s recent guidance follows a long pattern questioning the safety of Covid-19 vaccines. In June 2021, before Gov. Ron DeSantis appointed him to be the state’s surgeon general, Ladapo added his name among 20 other health professionals who petitioned the FDA against quickly authorizing the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. The petition also calls on more scrutiny of the mRNA technology used in the vaccines.

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Ladapo also previously recommended against children receiving the Covid-19 vaccines, prompting outcry from the American Academy of Pediatrics and other health associations. The state Department of Health also ~~opted against~~

pre-ordering vaccine supplies for children after the FDA gave emergency approval for kids under 5 to receive the vaccine. Florida was the only state to not pre-order the vaccines.

**FLORIDA**

## Florida is the only state to skip pre-ordering Covid-19 vaccines for kids

BY AREK SARKISSIAN

Ladapo said during a Tuesday night interview that he stands by his recommendation and the study in large part because he believes many people are now naturally immune to the virus, saying: "I absolutely believe that's the correct guidance."

He added that the latest guidance only applies to the pandemic as it stands today and not for its entirety.

"And I wouldn't have given that guidance, because I don't know the answer to that would have required much more thought," Ladapo said. "But at this point in the pandemic, with the degree of immunity in Florida, the calculus was much simpler."

He also said that he decided to sign the June 2021 petition after reading early studies showing adverse reactions to mRNA vaccines.

Salemi, however, said the study Ladapo highlighted shouldn't be used to give such importance guidance on the vaccine.

"I just cannot fathom a group of epidemiologists who would perform an investigation, looking at the risks of vaccination, and not also have performed an analysis that looked at the risks associated with the infection itself," Salemi said.

Salmon at Johns Hopkins University also pointed to the Florida DOH report, which had no listed authors.

“It would never get published in a decent journal,” Salmon said. “Any decent journal would reject it because there’s not enough detail.”

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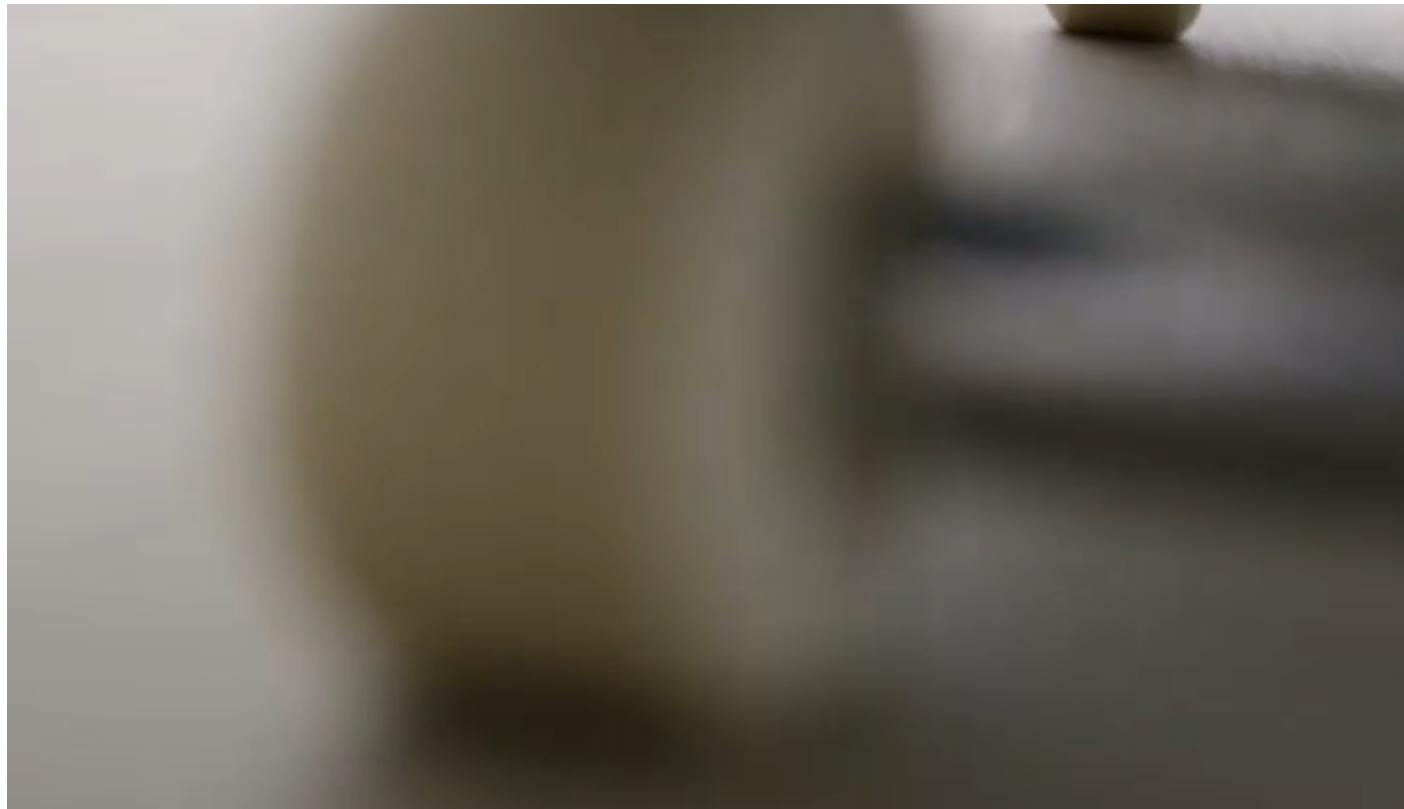
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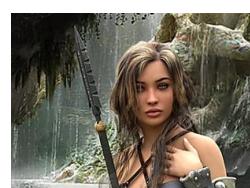
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