

China says coronavirus vaccine trials to start around late April

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Officials say China could start clinical trials for a coronavirus vaccine as early as late April

China could start clinical trials for a potential vaccine for the novel coronavirus around late April, an official said Friday.

Public and private researchers around the world have been working to develop treatments and vaccines to combat the COVID-19 virus that first emerged in central China in December.

More than 2,200 people have died and more than 75,000 have been infected by it in China. Another 11 people died abroad, with some 1,100 infections in around 25 countries.

"Several research teams were trying different techniques to develop a potential vaccine, and the earliest vaccine is expected to be submitted for [clinical trials](#) around late April," Xu Nanping, vice science and technology minister, told a press briefing.

China's vaccine development and research is currently "basically in step with other countries", he added.

The World Health Organization said Tuesday it could take a year or longer for a vaccine to become available.

"The vaccine could be the long-term because it could take up to 12 to 18 months and this is like preparing for the worst situation," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

China is currently using five different approaches to develop the vaccine to curb the spread of the virus, said Zeng Yixin, deputy director of China's National Health Commission

These include using inactivated coronavirus to produce a [vaccine](#), using genetic engineering to mass-produce proteins that could act as antigens for the novel coronavirus or modifying existing vaccines for influenza, Zeng said.

"At present, some projects have entered the stage of animal testing," he

said.

Scientists in the US announced Wednesday they had created the first 3D atomic-scale map of the part of the novel coronavirus that attaches to and infects human cells, a critical step toward developing vaccines and treatments.

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