

# Russia claims first coronavirus vaccine as global cases top 20 million

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Russia says that 20 foreign countries have pre-ordered over a billion doses of its coronavirus vaccine

Russia claimed Tuesday it has developed the world's first vaccine offering "sustainable immunity" against the coronavirus, as the pandemic

marked another bleak milestone with 20 million infections globally.

Western scientists have raised concerns about the speed with which Russia has developed vaccines, suggesting that researchers might be cutting corners.

And the World Health Organization on Tuesday warned that any approval of the Russian vaccine would require rigorous review of data to show its safety and efficacy.

But President Vladimir Putin said that one of his own daughters had received the inoculation, dubbed "Sputnik" after the pioneering 1950s Soviet satellite

"I know that it is quite effective, that it gives sustainable immunity," Putin said of the vaccine developed by the Gamaleya research institute in coordination with Moscow's defense ministry.

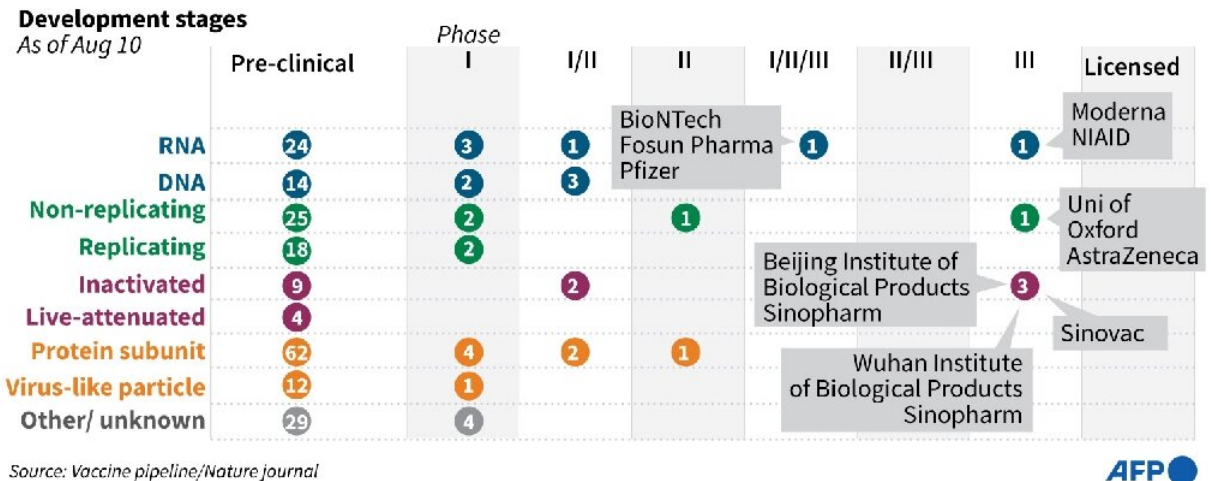
And Health Minister Mikhail Murashko said that [clinical trials](#) of the vaccine involving several thousand participants would continue.

Russia hopes to begin production in September and start vaccinating medical staff immediately afterwards.

Kirill Dmitriyev, the head of the Russian sovereign wealth fund that helped develop the vaccine, said the doubts about the vaccines were part of "coordinated and carefully orchestrated media attacks" designed to "discredit" the country.

## Race for a COVID-19 vaccine

There are currently 231 vaccine candidates being tracked by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine



Updated graphic on COVID-19 vaccines in development being tracked by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical medicine. Russia has developed the first vaccine offering "sustainable immunity" against the coronavirus, President Vladimir Putin announced August 11.

He said that 20 foreign countries have pre-ordered over a billion doses.

The race for a vaccine is heating up as nations across the globe brace for new outbreaks of the disease—even as they try to restart economies battered by months of lockdown.

According to an AFP tally, the number of confirmed infections worldwide has passed 20.1 million, with almost 737,000 deaths, with that number expected to surpass 750,000 within days.

## Tests underway

Elsewhere, Indonesia said it would launch a Phase 3 human trial of a

vaccine candidate from China's Sinovac Biotech.

Phase 3 refers to trials involving large numbers of human test subjects and is usually the last step before regulatory approval.

Sinovac's vaccine, dubbed CoronaVac, is already being tested on 9,000 Brazilian health workers.

The WHO says that 165 candidate vaccines are being worked on around the world, with six reaching Phase 3.



Some Germans demonstrated at the weekend against infection control measures and vaccines

But the WHO's emergencies director Michael Ryan warned that finding a vaccine would not automatically spell the end for COVID-19.

"We have perfectly effective polio and measles vaccines, and we still struggle to eradicate or eliminate those diseases. You've got to be able to deliver that vaccine to a population that want and demand to have that [vaccine](#)," he said.

## **Second waves 'inevitable'**

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has pointed to "green shoots of hope" in countries that had successfully clamped down on COVID-19, such as Rwanda and New Zealand.

But New Zealand on Tuesday reported its first locally-transmitted [coronavirus](#) infections in more than 100 days.

"We have all worked incredibly hard to prevent this scenario," Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said, but "we have also planned and prepared for it."

So far, New Zealand has reported just 22 deaths from coronavirus, although authorities repeatedly warned a second wave was "inevitable".

The remote Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan on Tuesday announced its first coronavirus lockdown after having been largely shielded from the disease for months.





People must now wear masks at Paris spots like Montmartre, famous for its view over the French capital's skyline

And in Europe, the EU's health agency urged countries to reinstate some controls as new cases began to pick up again.

"There is a true resurgence in cases in several countries as a result of physical distancing measures being relaxed," the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) said.

France has reacted by requiring mask-wearing in certain crowded areas and tourist hotspots of the capital Paris.

Several French towns and cities have already introduced similar

measures, as have parts of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Romania.

In Spain, authorities have ordered nationwide mask-wearing in public places and some regions have returned to lockdown.

The situation is "critical, we're right at the moment where things could get better or worse," said Salvador Macip, a health professor at the Open University of Barcelona.

Spain has added an average of almost 5,000 new cases per day over the past week—more than France, Britain, Germany and Italy combined.

In the Gaza Strip, the enclave's only border crossing with Egypt was opened to people wanting to leave for the first time since the pandemic began.



Gaza residents were unable to cross the border with Egypt for months

But some residents were fearful of leaving the tightly-sealed territory, which has seen just 81 cases.

"There is a fear of being infected with COVID-19 in cars or buses in Egypt," Hatem al-Mansi told AFP. "In Gaza, we don't have that problem."

## **'Every day like my last'**

In China, the city of Wuhan where the novel coronavirus first emerged is limping back to normal after lockdowns were lifted in April.

Business is slow for stall owners at food markets, while a pandemic-themed exhibition shows off autographed hazmat suits used by medical workers.

China officially recorded around 85,000 cases and just over 4,600 deaths—a fraction of the world's total—and has now largely brought its domestic virus spread under control.

Despite fears of a resurgence, some Wuhan residents are keen to enjoy the city's recovery.

"Now I enjoy every day as if it were the last," says Hu Fenglian. "I don't want to worry too much."

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