

Dutch say ready to roll out vaccine pending approval

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The Netherlands is ready to roll out coronavirus vaccines to some 3.5 million people in the first quarter of next year, the health minister announced on Friday.

The inoculation drive will first target people older than 60 and those working in high-risk medical jobs, and kick in as soon as Europe's medicines regulator gives the [green light](#), Hugo de Jonge said.

"Everything is ready as soon as the first vaccines are delivered. Most likely in the first months of 2021," he said in a statement.

"Fortunately the Netherlands has a lot of experience when it comes to vaccination campaigns," De Jonge added.

This included buying some 25 million safety needles and fridges to keep some vaccines at -70 degrees Celsius (-94 degrees Fahrenheit).

The country was also to implement a system to register for vaccination, which will be free of charge and voluntary.

The Netherlands, population 17 million, has registered some 473,190 [coronavirus](#) cases and 8,822 deaths to date as it battles a [second wave](#) of the pandemic with partial lockdown measures.

It has concluded deals for vaccines with five manufacturers: AstraZeneca, Pfizer/BioNTech, Janssen, CureVac and Sanofi, the ministry said Friday.

Negotiations are underway with US biotech firm Moderna for a sixth deal.

"As soon as the European Medicines Agency approves the first vaccines the first batch will also be delivered to the Netherlands," it said.

A [vaccine](#) is seen as the best chance to break the cycle of deadly virus surges and severe restrictions across much of the world since COVID-19 first emerged in China late last year and ballooned into a pandemic.

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