

Swiss secure three million more Moderna vaccine doses

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Switzerland announced Tuesday it had secured an additional three million doses of the Moderna vaccine as it tries to hedge its bets between rival COVID-19 jabs.

"Since the development and availability of COVID-19 vaccines is subject to a great deal of uncertainty, the government is pursuing various options," the Federal Office of Public Health said in a statement.

Switzerland has now secured, in total, around 7.5 million doses of US biotechnology firm Moderna's vaccine.

It has also signed contracts for around 5.3 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine and, in a deal announced Monday, around three million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

The wealthy Alpine nation, population 8.6 million, has therefore secured around 15.8 million [vaccine doses](#).

With all three manufacturers' vaccines, two doses are required per person.

The three different vaccines are currently awaiting approval from the Swissmedic national regulator.

"The [federal government](#) is still in discussion with various vaccine manufacturers," the statement said.

"Since it is not yet clear which vaccines will prevail, it is targeting a number of... vaccines based on different technologies."

Like the vaccine produced by Pfizer and BioNTech, US firm Moderna's vaccine is based on a new technology that uses [genetic material](#) in the form of mRNA (messenger [ribonucleic acid](#)).

On Tuesday, Britain became the first Western country to start a mass coronavirus vaccine campaign with a 90-year-old pensioner receiving her initial dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech jab.

Switzerland will not be among the first countries to do likewise, as it does not have a process for emergency authorisations of vaccines or drugs.

The authorities have said once a [vaccine](#) is approved, they hope to scale up quickly to provide free jabs for all by mid-2021.

Switzerland has recorded 357,121 positive tests and 5,099 deaths from the coronavirus.

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