

UK study that will infect volunteers with COVID approved

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A study which will expose volunteers to the coronavirus is to begin in Britain within a month after it gained approval from the country's clinical ethics body, the government said on Wednesday.

The study, the first of its kind in the world, will expose up to 90

volunteers between 18 and 30 years old to COVID-19 in a controlled environment, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy said.

The trial will look to establish the smallest amount of [virus](#) needed to cause infection, in order to help develop vaccines and treatments.

"While there has been very positive progress in [vaccine development](#), we want to find the best and most effective vaccines for use over the longer term," Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said.

The study will "help accelerate scientists' knowledge of how coronavirus affects people and could eventually further the rapid development of vaccines," he said.

Britain, one of the hardest-hit countries in the world by the coronavirus with more than 118,000 deaths, was also the first Western nation to begin a COVID vaccination campaign.

The country passed a [vaccine](#) milestone at the weekend with 15 million people having received their first jabs.

The [government](#) is targeting another 17 million people by the end of April, including everyone aged 50 and above, plus starting on second doses.

The study, backed by £33.6 million (\$46.6 million, 38.6 million euros) in [government funding](#), will work in partnership with London's Royal Free Hospital.

Its secure clinical research facilities are specifically designed to contain the virus, the government said.

Once the initial phase of the study has concluded, vaccines proven to be safe in [clinical trials](#) could be given to small numbers of volunteers who are then exposed to the COVID-19 virus, helping to identify the most effective vaccines.

"Our eventual aim is to establish which vaccines and treatments work best in beating this disease, but we need volunteers to support us in this work," said chief investigator Chris Chiu from Imperial College London.

During the study, medics and scientists will be on hand 24 hours a day to ensure the safety of volunteers as well as monitor the effects of the virus.

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