

Norway approves AstraZeneca vaccine for over 65s

March 9 2021



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Norway on Tuesday recommended that AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine be used for people over the age of 65 in light of new studies and amid hopes it would speed up vaccinations of the elderly.

The Nordic country had initially restricted the use of the vaccine to those under the age of 65 on the grounds that the Anglo-Swedish firm had not conducted enough research on people above that age.

Following in the footsteps of France, Germany, Italy and several Nordic neighbours, Norway's public health agency said it was now recommending the vaccine for all people over the age of 18, based on British studies now conducted on [elderly people](#).

The government said Tuesday it would follow the agency's recommendation.

Norway also wants to increase the waiting period between the first and second doses of the Pfizer/BioNtech and Moderna vaccines from three to six weeks, a move that still requires a final approval from the public health agency.

The agency has also been tasked with studying whether the interval can be extended beyond six weeks in order to allow a greater number of people to quickly receive a first dose.

"We now expect all adults to be offered a [vaccine](#) by or during the summer," Prime Minister Erna Solberg told parliament.

She also gave local medical authorities increased powers to try to curb a recent surge of infections in Norway.

While the country has one of the lowest incidence rates in Europe, the number of cases has soared lately.

"We still have a steep hill ahead of us but if we make it, the goal of a return to a more normal life will be within reach," Solberg said.

"If we manage to keep the epidemic under control in March-April, we can begin to reopen (the country) in May," she said.

If not, authorities may need to impose new nationwide restrictions, including a ban on serving alcohol and the closure of various public establishments, she warned.

More than 391,000 people had by Sunday received at least one jab in the country of 5.4 million people, and almost 210,000 had gotten two doses.

On Monday, Norway reported 632 Covid-related deaths since the beginning of the pandemic.

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Citation: Norway approves AstraZeneca vaccine for over 65s (2021, March 9) retrieved 9 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-03-norway-astrazeneca-vaccine-65s.html>

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