

Covid 3rd wave peak in France 'appears to be behind us': PM

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The peak of the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in France "appears to be behind us", Prime Minister Jean Castex said on Thursday, announcing that travel restrictions will be relaxed from early next month.

He told reporters there had been a "genuine fall in the circulation of the

virus over the last 10 days", confirming that restrictions confining people to a 10-kilometre (six-mile) radius of their homes would be dropped from May 3.

France is currently under its third lockdown to stem the coronavirus but this time it has been considerably more relaxed than the previous ones, with [outdoor activities](#) encouraged to promote [mental health](#).

Most non-essential shops have been closed, however, along with cafes, restaurants and also cultural venues, with players in many sectors piling pressure on the government for a reopening after months of closure.

Castex said "shops, certain cultural and sporting activities and the cafe terraces" could reopen "around mid-May", depending on the evolution of the health situation.

He emphasised that the government could also allow reopenings on a regional basis starting with those areas with lower virus prevalence.

A nationwide 7:00 pm curfew would remain in place until further notice, he said, adding that while the measure would be reviewed in mid-May there was no promise over when it would be relaxed.

There were 5,981 people with coronavirus in [intensive care](#) in France on Thursday, official data showed, with the figure to the relief of the authorities flattening out below 6,000 over the last days.

At total of 102,164 people have died in France from the pandemic but, after a slow start, the [vaccine campaign](#) is gaining pace with over 13 million people now given at least a first dose.

Health Minister Olivier Veran said that France would begin offering the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which requires only a single shot, from

Saturday to people aged 55 and over.

It will be the fourth vaccine being offered by France after Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and AstraZeneca.

Europe's medicines regulator said Tuesday that [blood clots](#) should be listed as a "very rare" side effect of Johnson & Johnson's coronavirus vaccine, but that the benefits of the shot still outweighed the risks.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin meanwhile said that in order to keep potentially dangerous COVID-19 variants out of the country, all passengers arriving from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, India and South Africa would need to observe at their residence a 10-day quarantine which will be monitored by police.

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