

EU to get 50 million Pfizer doses early as Denmark scraps AZ

April 14 2021, by Marc Burleigh, With Camille Bas-Wohlert In Copenhagen



Brazil is still struggling to contain its outbreak

The EU said Wednesday that it is expecting 50 million Pfizer coronavirus vaccine doses earlier than expected, as rival drugmaker AstraZeneca faced a fresh setback after Denmark banned its use over blood clot links.

The news comes after Johnson & Johnson said it would delay its European rollout, also over blood clot fears—a major hit for the continent's beleaguered immunisation campaign, as several countries battle rising caseloads.

The J&J and AstraZeneca setbacks are a dampener on hopes that mass immunisations can allow a swift exit from a pandemic that has now killed close to three million people and ravaged the global economy.

But there was nonetheless some good news on the vaccine front, with 50 million BioNTech/Pfizer doses that were due to arrive in Europe only at the end of 2021 brought forward. They will start arriving as soon as this month.

Citing the uncertainty created by earlier delays, EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen stressed: "It is therefore important to act swiftly, anticipate and adjust whenever it is possible."

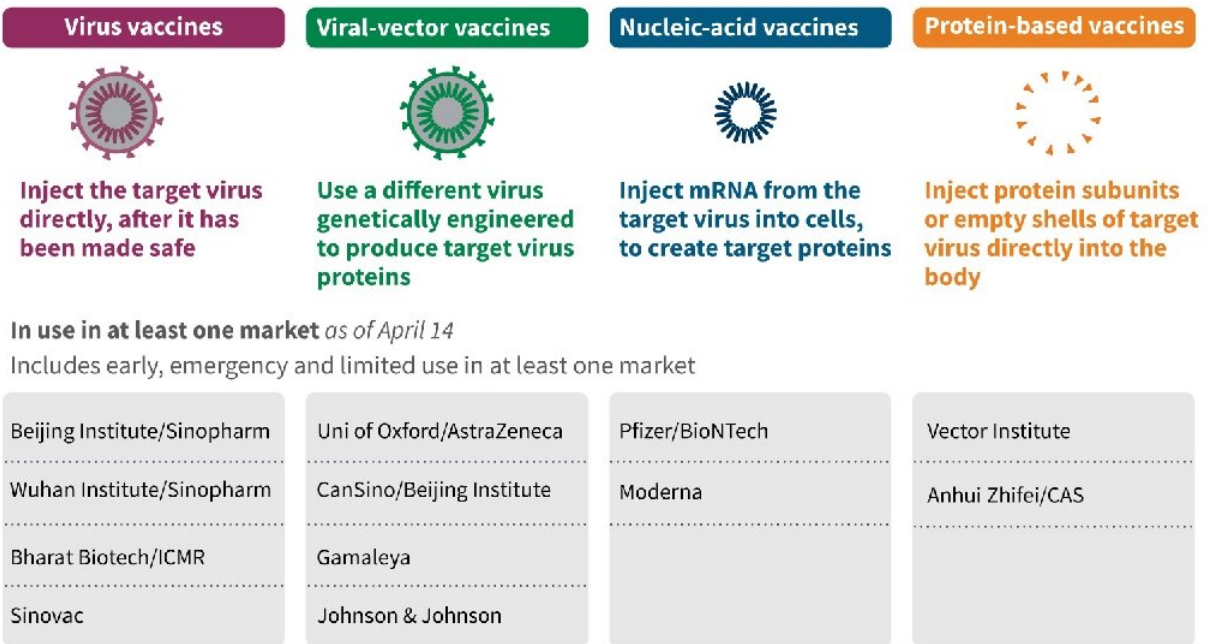
More than 820 million COVID-19 [vaccine doses](#) have now been administered globally, but with demand far outstripping supply, countries are scrambling to secure much-needed jabs.

The race to secure vaccines has sparked diplomatic rows, notably between the European Union and the UK after the bloc accused London of hoarding jabs.

Australia has also accused the EU of falling short on promised doses. Canberra's trade minister will travel to Europe this week for talks with his counterparts in Germany, France and Brussels about vaccine exports.

Covid-19 vaccines in use

As tracked by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine



Source: Vaccine pipeline/Nature journal/US media



Covid-19 vaccines in use

'I haven't been able to bury you'

Johnson & Johnson said it would put off its European deliveries over reports of rare blood clots among people who had received the shot.

US health regulators also recommended pausing its use after six reported cases of clots—among more than 6.8 million J&J doses administered in the US.

And experts from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) were due to meet Wednesday to decide whether or not to recommend new restrictions on its use.

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) said Wednesday it would make its recommendation on the safety of the J&J jab next week after evaluating clot links.

AstraZeneca has faced similar setbacks, with many countries now limiting its use to older people following isolated cases blood clots among younger populations, some fatal.



More than 820 million doses of the vaccine have now been administered globally

Denmark said Wednesday it would stop using it altogether—a European first—despite assurances from the EMA and the World Health

Organization that the benefits far outweigh possible risks.

Russia's state-run Gamaleya research institute meanwhile said there was no risk of blood clots from its Sputnik V vaccine.

Several countries, from Germany to India to Turkey, are battling a worrying spike in cases.

In Rome, a billboard company manager has put up huge signs around the city shaming authorities for their failure to end a shortage of burial plots due to surging death rates during the pandemic.

"Mum, sorry I've not been able to have you buried yet," reads the message put up by Oberdan Zuccaroli in memory of his late mother, who died of a heart attack on March 8.

River Ganges infections

In India, more than 1,000 people tested positive after bathing in the River Ganges for the world's biggest religious festival.



A healthworker at a morgue in Paraguay

A huge crowd of worshippers packed the riverbanks to take a dip as part of a bathing ritual, despite India's soaring virus cases.

"Our faith is the biggest thing for us," Siddharth Chakrapani, a member of one of the Kumbh Mela organising committees, told AFP, explaining why so many people entered the river.

The World Health Organization has meanwhile expressed concern that the pandemic could worsen in the Middle East and North Africa during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

Already last week, detected cases in the region rose 22 percent and deaths by 17 percent, said Ahmed al-Mandhari, WHO's chief for the eastern Mediterranean.

In Turkey officials imposed new restrictions including a tougher overnight curfew, while in Bangladesh police patrolled the capital as a strict nationwide lockdown was rolled out.

Most European countries are still facing virus restrictions due to stubbornly high caseloads, and on Wednesday France's Bayonne festival—one of the continent's largest gatherings, attracting around a million people each year—was forced to call off the July event.



German doctors said they are treating an increasing number of young people as new variants sweep the country

But in Belgium, cafes and restaurants got the greenlight to open their terraces from May 8 after a slight easing of cases there. Swiss officials also announced that bars and restaurants and some leisure facilities could reopen next Monday.

In Japan, a spike in COVID cases forced a section of the Tokyo Olympics torch relay to be pulled from [public roads](#).

But with just 100 days to go before the scheduled opening, International Olympic Committee vice president John Coates told reporters that cancellation was "certainly not" on the table.

"The Tokyo Games will be the light at the end of the tunnel," he insisted.

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