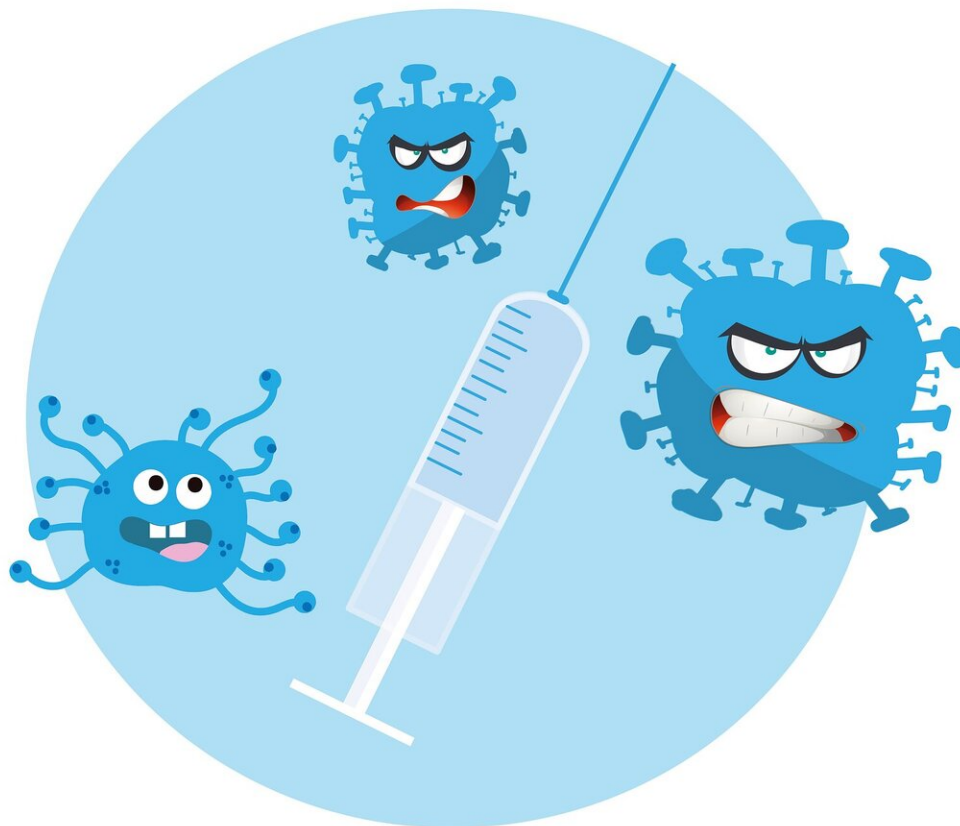


Hungary to ease lockdown after hitting vaccination milestone

April 6 2021



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Hungary's prime minister says some lockdown restrictions will be lifted Wednesday after more than a quarter of the population has been inoculated with at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

In a video on Facebook Tuesday, Viktor Orban said a vaccination benchmark of 2.5 million first shots had been reached, a condition for the start of a gradual reopening that will loosen several pandemic restrictions.

"Today, we reached an important milestone," Orban said. "The virus waged a war against us, and the only weapon that promises victory is the vaccine."

The decision to ease restrictions comes as Hungary battles with a devastating surge in the COVID-19 pandemic. It has one of the highest infection rates in Europe in recent weeks and the third-worst death rate per 1 million inhabitants in the world, according to Johns Hopkins University.

Beginning Wednesday, businesses and services that have been closed since March 8 will be permitted to reopen if capacity limits are enforced and social distancing is observed. The mandatory closing time for shops will be extended from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., and the start of an overnight curfew in place since November will be extended by two hours to 10 p.m.

Hungary, with a population of less than 10 million, has the second-highest vaccination rate in the European Union due to a procurement strategy that sought jabs from China and Russia in addition to those got through the EU.

"Hungary can be and will be the European country where everyone gets a [vaccine](#) the fastest," Orban said.

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