

Philippines lifts suspension on AstraZeneca vaccine for under 60s

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The Philippines has lifted a suspension on the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine for people under 60, an official said Monday, arguing "the benefits outweigh the risk" as the country battles record infections.

Several countries suspended use of the drug after it was linked to rare but serious blood clotting.

Most have subsequently resumed after the European Medicines Agency, emphasised the benefits of the jab, judging it "safe and effective".

Philippine Health Undersecretary Rosario Vergeire said the drug regulator had recommended "extra precautions" for administering the shot to people with certain existing [health conditions](#).

"We need to recall that only a very small percentage of the population is affected by adverse effects from AstraZeneca," Vergeire told reporters.

"We will come up with guidelines on the use of AstraZeneca to include these different precautions that was stated by the Food and Drug Administration."

The Philippines has received around three million doses of Covid-19 vaccines so far—the vast majority from China's Sinovac.

It also got 525,600 AstraZeneca doses through the Covax programme, according to official data.

The country expects another three million AstraZeneca doses in the coming months.

More than 1.2 million people have received their first dose of a [vaccine](#), most of them health workers, official data shows.

Fewer than 200,000 people are fully vaccinated seven weeks after inoculations started.

President Rodrigo Duterte's government has been skewered by critics

over its handling of the pandemic and efforts to secure vaccines.

A lockdown in the capital and four surrounding provinces has been in place for the past three weeks in a bid to curb the spread of the virus and decongest hospitals.

The roughly three million vaccine doses received so far represent a fraction of the shots Manila has been negotiating with seven manufacturers to secure.

The bulk of the supply is not expected until later this year.

But Duterte said last week he did not know when the country would have enough doses to vaccinate everyone, warning "many more will die".

The Philippines recorded more than 9,600 new infections on Monday, taking its caseload to 945,745, including just over 16,000 deaths.

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