

Hong Kong opens vaccine drive to children aged 12 and older

June 10 2021, by Zen Soo



Students wearing face masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, walk across a street in Hong Kong, Thursday, June 10, 2021. Government officials said Thursday that they will expand the vaccination drive to about 240,000 children from 12 to 15 years old starting Friday, joining other countries such as Singapore and the U.S. that have started vaccinating children. Credit: AP Photo/Kin Cheung

Hong Kong will allow children age 12 and above to receive the Pfizer coronavirus vaccine as it seeks to boost immunization rates in the city.

Government officials said Thursday they will offer the [vaccine](#) to about 240,000 children from 12 to 15 years old starting Friday, joining other countries that have started vaccinating children.

The move comes as Hong Kong is urging its 7.5 million population to get inoculated. Since its [vaccination drive](#) began in late February, just over 15% of the population has been fully vaccinated.

The city has seen widespread vaccine hesitancy due to a mistrust of the government and outsized fears of side effects after several people died following inoculations, despite a determination that the deaths were not directly related to the vaccine.

"The government attaches high importance to getting adolescents and students vaccinated, and it is the government's hope that more students, parents and teachers will be vaccinated," said Secretary for the Civil Service Patrick Nip.

Since they are below 18, children must obtain parental approval before they can be vaccinated.

Health minister Sophia Chan urged parents to let their children get vaccinated to "help them to go back to school for their normal lives as soon as possible." Students in kindergarten through [secondary school](#) are currently attending only half-day classes as part of preventive measures during the pandemic.



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The semi-autonomous Chinese city is offering the Pfizer vaccine—better known as BioNTech in the city—and the Chinese-made Sinovac vaccine.

Hong Kong officials say those wanting to receive the Pfizer vaccine must do so by the end of August before the doses expire, and that vaccination centers administering the Pfizer vaccine will cease

operations in September.



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The [private sector](#) is offering a slew of incentives to encourage people to get vaccinated. Companies are offering gold bars, a Tesla car and even an apartment in lucky draws open to vaccinated residents.

Hong Kong ended a 6-week streak with no local infections last week when a 17-year-old girl tested positive despite having no travel history. Her mother and sister later also tested positive.

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