

Cyprus to start COVID-19 vaccination of children 12 and over

July 30 2021, by Menelaos Hadjicostis

Cyprus will start the voluntary COVID-19 vaccination of children over age 12 next week using mRNA shots produced by Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna, authorities said Friday.

Health Minister Michalis Hadjipantela said that Cyprus is following other European Union countries including France, Germany and Italy which began vaccinating children between 12 and 15.

The consent of parents and guardians is a prerequisite for all children's vaccinations in Cyprus. Hadjipantela urged [young people](#) to get the shot, with officials saying the median age of those infected in the last 14 days is 28.

"The world's [scientific community](#) is in unison making it loud and clear that those who haven't been vaccinated yet are most at risk," Hadjipantela told reporters.

Authorities in nearby Greece also opened vaccination appointments for minors aged 12 and older, seeking to dampen a surge in infections driven by the delta variant. Nearly 49% of Greece's [population](#) and 56.% of the [adult population](#) have so far been fully vaccinated.

But some critics say that vaccinating children and younger populations in richer countries leads to [inequity in developing nations](#), which have struggled to secure enough doses to inoculate even their most [vulnerable populations](#).

Hadjipantela also announced that the compulsory display of the "SafePass"—electronic or paper documentation proving either vaccination, having been infected in the last six months or indicating a negative PCR test in the previous 72 hours—will be expanded. Apart from all indoor and outdoor restaurant, bar and club areas as well as [shopping malls](#), supermarkets and other [retail stores](#), "SafePass" must now be displayed at nursing homes and hospitals.

The "SafePass" measure has triggered a wave of disenchantment among those who say this is another assault on their right to assemble and go wherever they please.

Thousands of people have protested against the move, while 26 people have been arrested following a July 18 attack against the headquarters of the Dias Media Group in the capital Nicosia where they smashed the lobby and set fire to cars. Some protesters who oppose vaccination against COVID-19 have targeted Dias over what they see as the group's overly critical stance of their views on vaccines.

Meanwhile, foreigners traveling to Cyprus must undergo a PCR test a week into their stay. Only travelers who have been vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 in the previous three months are exempt.

Cyprus in the last month has seen COVID-19 infections spike to their highest levels since the start of the pandemic. More than 98,000 people have so far been infected with COVID-19, corresponding to more than 10% of the east Mediterranean island nation's population.

Deaths due to the coronavirus now stand at 415, while the country's health system is coming increasingly under strain as more than 80 people are currently hospitalized in serious condition.

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