

Israel to offer COVID jabs in schools to avoid closures

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Israel said Monday it would offer COVID-19 vaccinations to students on school grounds as it announced the school year would open on time next week, despite surging coronavirus cases.

"Pupils... will be vaccinated on [school grounds](#) during school hours, subject to parental approval," a government statement said, confirming classes would begin on September 1.

Israeli leaders say they are trying to avoid repeating disruptive school closures amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The country has seen a steep rise in coronavirus infections after months when its world-beating [vaccine campaign](#) drove down cases.

The health ministry said Monday that 6,467 new COVID cases were recorded in Israel a day prior, with 1,142 people hospitalised.

About 30 percent of children aged 12-15 have received two vaccine doses in Israel, far less than any other age group.

The school reopening plan would also require pupils younger than 12 to bring parental approval to perform a coronavirus test on the first day of school.

Further, high school classes in cities with high rates of transmission would require 70 percent of students to be vaccinated or move to [online learning](#).

Some in government had opposed vaccines in schools, with Education Minister Yifat Shasha-Biton saying in July that students could feel [peer pressure](#) to get vaccines.

On Monday she praised the plan on Twitter, writing, "Opening the [school year](#)—vital to students' stability and mental resilience."

Ran Balicer, chairman of Israel's national expert panel on COVID-19, warned on [public radio](#), "of course it will not be possible to completely

prevent infections."

Already, the new wave has pushed the government to issue new restrictions on gatherings and to launch a third booster vaccine to people aged 40 and up.

Monday's plan comes a day after Israel launched a national serological survey focused on children aged three to 12, who are not yet eligible for the COVID vaccine but might have developed antibodies after having had an unrecorded case.

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