

Israel offers COVID vaccine booster to ages 12 and up

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Israel Sunday widened access to a third coronavirus vaccine jab to anyone aged 12 and up, with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett insisting it was an effective way to contain an infection surge.

Moves by several nations to offer third jabs have faced criticism including from the World Health Organization, which insists [poorer countries](#) should gain wider access to vaccines before wealthy ones offer booster shots.

But with Israel, a country of 9.3 million, approaching daily infection tallies that regularly exceed 8,000 and serious COVID cases, Bennett has pressed ahead with the booster scheme.

"The third dose of the [vaccine](#) works," he said in a statement, announcing that it was now "available from age 12 and up".

He said that with two million Israelis having received a third shot, the results are clear as "the increase in severe morbidity has begun to slow".

Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz said there was no doubt that a booster shot was "effective in preventing infection, and it significantly reduces the risk of serious and fatal illnesses".

Israel, which registered 7,000 new cases on Sunday, this week passed the one million cases threshold since the pandemic began.

The latest surge has largely been blamed on the highly transmissible Delta variant.

More than 6,950 people have died from the virus in Israel.

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