

# Italy offers boosters to those over 40 amid 4th virus wave

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Italy is expanding the number of people eligible for a booster vaccine as the 4th wave in the COVID-19 pandemic grips Europe.

Health Minister Roberto Speranza told lawmakers in the Chamber of Deputies on Wednesday that anyone 40 years or older can get the [booster shot](#) starting on Dec. 1.

Italy has already offered boosters to those 60 years old and older who received their last vaccine dose at least six months earlier.

The country hasn't been hit as hard in the latest wave of the coronavirus pandemic as some northern countries including Austria and Germany as well as several nations in eastern Europe.

Italian authorities are scrambling to keep it that way.

Experts credit in large part Italy's vaccination rate. Nearly 84% of those 12 and older and eligible for the shots are fully vaccinated.

Since early in the pandemic, Italy has also required masks to be worn indoors in places like supermarkets, cinemas, churches and on mass transit. Other anti-pandemic measures include the requirement starting this autumn for a so-called Green Pass certification of vaccination, recovery from COVID-19 or a negative test to access workplaces. The certification was already required for indoor dining, gyms, museums and theaters.

Announcing the expansion of booster eligibility to those 40 years and up, Speranza called the boosters "an essential piece of our strategy to combat COVID."

The minister added that "the more this country succeeds in bolstering itself in speeding up the administering of the third dose, the more we will be able to manage the end of autumn and winter, which pose a wide open challenge and won't easy to handle."

All those who received the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine are also eligible for a [booster](#), regardless of age.

So far nearly 40% of people already eligible for the boosters in Italy have gotten the third dose, according to Italian government figures.

Doctors and virus experts have said about 25% of all recent cases in Italy have occurred among minors, and authorities are hoping for regulatory approval soon for COVID-19 vaccines for those 5 through 11 years old.

Among the hardest hit regions recently has been Friuli Venezia Giulia, with clusters of virus outbreak linked to frequent protests in the port city of Trieste by unmasked and unvaccinated demonstrators against the Green Pass workplace requirement.

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