

French kids line up to get vaccine shots as omicron spreads

December 22 2021, by Angela Charlton and Barbara Surk



A pediatrician administers a dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to Dimitri Marck, 8, at the National Velodrome in Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, west of Paris, France, Wednesday, Dec. 22, 2021. Schoolchildren clung nervously to their parents as they entered a vast vaccinodrome west of Paris, then walked proudly away with a "vaccination diploma" as France kicked off mass vaccinations of children age 5 to 11. Credit: AP Photo/Michel Euler

French schoolchildren clung nervously to their parents as they entered a vast vaccine center west of Paris on Wednesday—then walked excitedly away with a decorated "vaccination diploma," as France kicked off mass COVID-19 inoculations for children age 5 to 11.

It's not a moment too soon for the French government, which is facing the highest recorded infection rates since the pandemic began but trying to avoid a new lockdown.

The health minister said Wednesday that the swift-spreading omicron variant is expected to be dominant in France by next week, but ruled out additional restrictions on public life for now. Officials are hoping that a surge in vaccinations will be enough to limit the mounting pressure on hospitals, where COVID-19 patients occupy more than 60% of beds.

At a "vaccinodrome" in the Paris suburb of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, children lined up for first-day jabs Wednesday wearing masks adorned with puppies, flowers or Marvel superheros.

One worked out his nerves by rolling his toy car on any surface he could find. Another played games on his mom's phone. Eight-year-old Alvin Yin cried, while his 9-year-old sister Noemie tried to comfort him.

Dimitri Marck, 8, admitted, "It's a little weird. I heard about this on TV, and now I'm here." But he said he's glad to get vaccinated so he can see grandparents for the holidays.



A medical staff hands over a syringe with the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for children to her colleague at the National Velodrome in Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, west of Paris, France, Wednesday, Dec. 22, 2021. Schoolchildren clung nervously to their parents as they entered a vast vaccinodrome west of Paris, then walked proudly away with a "vaccination diploma" as France kicked off mass vaccinations of children age 5 to 11. Credit: AP Photo/Michel Euler

France started vaccinating 5- to 11-year-olds with health risks earlier this month and expanded it to all children in that age group Wednesday as part of accelerated vaccination efforts. Children need the consent of at least one parent, and one parent has to be present when they get a shot.

As of early December, more than 1,000 in every 100,000 children in France aged 6-10 were infected with coronavirus, according to

government figures. Currently, 145 children are hospitalized for [severe illness](#) due to COVID-19 and 27 [children](#) are receiving [medical treatment](#) in intensive care units, Health Minister Olivier Veran said Wednesday on BFM television.

France registered 72,832 new cases Tuesday and has 16,000 people hospitalized with COVID-19, among the highest numbers in Europe.

In a radio interview Wednesday, Labor Minister Elisabeth Borne asked companies to let employees work remotely wherever possible for at least three if not four days a week. French businesses largely returned to in-person work in 2020.



Hugo Chappaz, 9, displays his vaccination diploma at the National Velodrome in Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, west of Paris, France, Wednesday, Dec. 22, 2021.

Schoolchildren clung nervously to their parents as they entered a vast vaccinodrome west of Paris, then walked proudly away with a "vaccination diploma" as France kicked off mass vaccinations of children age 5 to 11. Credit: AP Photo/Michel Euler

France has shut down nightclubs and banned New Year's Eve fireworks and other mass end-of-year celebrations, including concerts.

"It's an evening sacrificed for a good cause," Veran said.

But his main message was to urge more vaccination. More than 89% of people 12 and over in France have had two doses, and about a third have had a booster shot.

Hugo, 8, was the last member of his family to get the shot and felt left out. His father, Benoit Chappaz, said they got him vaccinated "not because the government wants us to," but for their family's peace of mind and for general public health.

Nearby, American-born Evan, 7, squirmed in his chair. His great-uncle died with COVID-19, and his family knows several people who have been hospitalized with the virus.

Asked how he would face the injection, he said, "I'm going to scream. And then maybe if Mommy agrees, I can get an ice cream or something sweet, because I got a vaccine."



Hugo Chappaz, 9, left, waits with his father Benoit Chappaz, right, and his mother >> Julie Roret to be vaccinated at the National Velodrome in Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, west of Paris, France, Wednesday, Dec. 22, 2021. Schoolchildren clung nervously to their parents as they entered a vast vaccinodrome west of Paris, then walked proudly away with a "vaccination diploma" as France kicked off mass vaccinations of children age 5 to 11. Credit: AP Photo/Michel Euler



General view of vaccination center at the National Velodrome in Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, west of Paris, France, Wednesday, Dec. 22, 2021. Schoolchildren clung nervously to their parents as they entered a vast vaccinodrome west of Paris, then walked proudly away with a "vaccination diploma" as France kicked off mass vaccinations of children age 5 to 11. Credit: AP Photo/Michel Euler



A pediatrician administers a dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to Hugo Chappaz, 9, at the National Velodrome in Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, west of Paris, France, Wednesday, Dec. 22, 2021. Schoolchildren clung nervously to their parents as they entered a vast vaccinodrome west of Paris, then walked proudly away with a "vaccination diploma" as France kicked off mass vaccinations of children age 5 to 11. Credit: AP Photo/Michel Euler



Dimitri Marck, 8, center, waits with his father Matthieu Marck at the National Velodrome in Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, west of Paris, France, Wednesday, Dec. 22, 2021. Schoolchildren clung nervously to their parents as they entered a vast vaccinodrome west of Paris, then walked proudly away with a "vaccination diploma" as France kicked off mass vaccinations of children age 5 to 11. Credit: AP Photo/Michel Euler



Medical staffs prepare syringes with the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for children at the National Velodrome in Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, west of Paris, France, Wednesday, Dec. 22, 2021. Schoolchildren clung nervously to their parents as they entered a vast vaccinodrome west of Paris, then walked proudly away with a "vaccination diploma" as France kicked off mass vaccinations of children age 5 to 11. Credit: AP Photo/Michel Euler

As the doctor glided the needle into his arm, Evan didn't scream. Instead, he wrapped himself around his mother and buried his head in her jacket.

Then as he left, he proudly held up his "diplome de vaccination."

© 2021 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: French kids line up to get vaccine shots as omicron spreads (2021, December 22)
retrieved 3 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-12-french-kids-line-vaccine-shots.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.