

Israelis over 60, medics to get 4th Covid jab to curb Omicron

December 21 2021



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said Tuesday Israelis over the age of 60 and medical teams will be eligible for a fourth COVID vaccination, following the recommendation of an expert panel.

The decision came as the state was struggling to contain the spread of the Omicron variant, imposing travel and other restrictions while avoiding a domestic lockdown.

"I gave an order to prepare immediately for a fourth vaccination," Bennett said on Twitter, with a spokesperson saying Israel would be the world's first country to administer the fourth shot.

"The world will follow in our footsteps."

Earlier, Bennett had called the country's Pandemic Expert Committee's recommendation to administer a fourth coronavirus vaccination to Israelis over 60 and medical teams "wonderful news".

"(It) will assist us in getting through the Omicron wave that is engulfing the world," he said.

"The citizens of Israel were the first in the world to receive the third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and we are continuing to pioneer with the fourth dose as well," he said in remarks relayed by his office, calling on those who meet the criteria to "Go and get vaccinated."

A statement from the health ministry noted that immunodeficient people will also be eligible for the fourth shot, which can be administered to them, the elderly and the medical teams at least four months after the third shot.

Bennett's remarks came following a meeting of the country's ministerial coronavirus cabinet which convened amid growing concern over the spread of the Omicron variant.

The cabinet had issued limitations on eating in shopping malls and instructed that children in communities with high morbidity and low

vaccination rates would learn from home.

Earlier Tuesday, lawmakers banned citizens and residents from US travel, adding it to a list of more than 50 countries declared off-limits in an effort to contain the Omicron coronavirus variant.

A parliamentary committee voted to approve a health ministry recommendation putting the United States on Israel's "red list," along with Italy, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Hungary, Morocco, Portugal, Switzerland and Turkey, committee spokeswoman Ronit Gal said in a statement.

The ban comes into effect Wednesday and will remain in force for at least a week, Gal added.

The United Kingdom, France and Spain were among countries already on the red list, as well as the United Arab Emirates and much of Africa.

Adding the US to the red list was a significant move for Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's government, as hundreds of thousands of Israelis hold US citizenship.

The designation means that Israeli passport holders and residents cannot fly to the US without permission from an exemptions committee.

The highly transmissible Omicron variant accounted for 73.2 percent of new cases in the US over the week that ended Saturday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

- First Omicron death—The latest Israeli restrictions were approved as the health ministry reported that as of Tuesday there were 1,148 confirmed or "highly likely" Omicron cases in the country.

More than half the cases were among vaccinated people.

Also Tuesday, the Soroka medical centre in Beersheba announced that a man infected with Omicron had died, in what was believed to be Israel's first death by the variant.

A statement from Soroka said the man, in his 60s, suffered "many severe" pre-existing medical conditions and died on Monday after a two-week hospitalisation.

The Omicron cases were part of an upward trend of coronavirus infections. On Monday 1,306 cases were recorded, a level last seen in October.

Israel blocked nearly all foreign visitors last month after Omicron was detected in South Africa, just weeks after permitting tourists to enter for the first time since the pandemic began.

More than 4.1 million Israelis have received three doses of a coronavirus vaccine in the country of roughly 9.3 million people.

But inoculation rates remain low among teens and young children. Fewer than one percent of children aged five to 11 have received a single coronavirus jab.

© 2021 AFP

Citation: Israelis over 60, medics to get 4th Covid jab to curb Omicron (2021, December 21) retrieved 15 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-12-israelis-medics-4th-covid-jab.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.