

Thousands line up for 'jingle jabs' on Christmas in England

December 25 2021, by Danica Kirka



People wait in line to receive a 'Jingle Jab' Covid vaccination booster injection at the Good Health Pharmacy, north London, Saturday, Dec. 25, 2021. Thousands of people across England are spending a few minutes of Christmas Day to line up under leaden winter skies to be vaccinated against COVID-19 as the omicron variant fuels a surge in infections across the country. The Good Health Pharmacy in north London is one of dozens of vaccination sites that kept their doors open Saturday to administer "jingle jabs" amid a government push to offer booster shots to all adults by the end of the year. Credit: Gareth Fuller/PA via AP

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Pharmacist Fenil Lalji said the shop's owners decided to stay open because they lost a family member to the pandemic and wanted to do what they could to help others stay safe.

"His family have obviously had a really hard time so his children wanted to make sure they could provide the maximum level of contribution to fighting this COVID virus," Lalji told the BBC. "It was a very hard time for his family, and we're just trying to make sure no one has to go through that."

Britain has expanded its booster program over the past two weeks, reopening sports stadiums and cathedrals as inoculation hubs, after research showed that two doses of the vaccine weren't enough to protect against the highly transmissible omicron variant. Even as the National Health Service races to vaccinate as many people as possible, the number of confirmed infections soared past 100,000 a day last week for the first time during the pandemic.



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Health Secretary Sajid Javid on Friday urged people to "make the booster a part of your Christmas this year," praised those who are working through the festive period to deliver the shots.

"I would like to thank the tireless and selfless work of the NHS and

volunteers for sacrificing time with their loved ones to deliver life saving jabs through Christmas Day and Boxing Day this year, and helping everyone to Get Boosted Now," Javid said in a statement.

The omicron threat was underlined by data released by the Office for National Statistics, which estimated that 1.7 million people in the U.K. had COVID-19 in the week ending Dec. 19, the highest number since comparable figures were first recorded in autumn 2020.

While infection rates are rising, public health officials hope that widespread vaccination will limit the number of people who are hospitalized or ultimately die from COVID-19.

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