

Sri Lanka vaccinates children as doctors warn of COVID surge

January 7 2022, by Bharatha Mallawarachi



A Sri Lankan school student reacts holding another student as she receives her first COVID-19 vaccine from a health worker in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Friday, Jan. 7, 2022. Sri Lankan health authorities starting to inoculate the children in the age group of 12 to 15 in it's latest effort to contain the spreading of COVID-19 as the island nation's top medical specialists warned of a massive wave of infection driven by the Omicron variant in the coming weeks. Credit: AP Photo/Eranga Jayawardena

Sri Lankan health authorities on Friday began vaccinating children aged 12 to 15, as the island nation's top medical specialists warned of a wave of COVID-19 infections in the coming weeks driven by the omicron variant.

Under the new vaccination program, [children](#) will be given a single dose of the Pfizer vaccine, said the health ministry. Earlier, children above 15 could be vaccinated.

The latest effort begins as schools are set to fully reopen from Monday. Children were previously allowed to attend schools in two groups.

The move also comes as authorities take steps to make vaccination certificates compulsory to enter [public places](#).

According to health officials, 47 [omicron cases](#) have been detected so far in Sri Lanka.

The Association of Medical Specialists, which comprises the country's top doctors, pointed to a surge in COVID-19 cases last April as a warning "that history is repeating itself."

Almost 15,000 people died in that outbreak.

"Shops and bars, (New Year's Eve) parties were jampacked," the association said in a statement. "It is therefore inevitable that the omicron variant will cause a massive wave of infection during the coming weeks."

Last April's surge led to two separate lockdowns. The latest lockdown was lifted in October and authorities have since gradually relaxed many COVID-related restrictions.



A Sri Lankan school student receives her first COVID-19 vaccine from a health worker in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Friday, Jan. 7, 2022. Sri Lankan health authorities starting to inoculate the children in the age group of 12 to 15 in it's latest effort to contain the spreading of COVID-19 as the island nation's top medical specialists warned of a massive wave of infection driven by the Omicron variant in the coming weeks. Credit: AP Photo/Eranga Jayawardena



Sri Lankan school students receive their first COVID-19 vaccine from a health workers in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Friday, Jan. 7, 2022. Sri Lankan health authorities starting to inoculate the children in the age group of 12 to 15 in it's latest effort to contain the spreading of COVID-19 as the island nation's top medical specialists warned of a massive wave of infection driven by the Omicron variant in the coming weeks. Credit: AP Photo/Eranga Jayawardena



A Sri Lankan school student reacts as she receives her first COVID-19 vaccine from a health worker in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Friday, Jan. 7, 2022. Sri Lankan health authorities starting to inoculate the children in the age group of 12 to 15 in it's latest effort to contain the spreading of COVID-19 as the island nation's top medical specialists warned of a massive wave of infection driven by the Omicron variant in the coming weeks. Credit: AP Photo/Eranga Jayawardena



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A Sri Lankan health worker administers COVID-19 vaccine to a school student, in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Friday, Jan. 7, 2022. Sri Lankan health authorities starting to inoculate the children in the age group of 12 to 15 in it's latest effort to contain the spreading of COVID-19 as the island nation's top medical specialists warned of a massive wave of infection driven by the Omicron variant in the coming weeks. Credit: AP Photo/Eranga Jayawardena



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At the peak last July, Sri Lanka reported more than 3,000 daily infections and more than 200 deaths. Daily infections are now around 500, with fewer than 20 deaths.

The country has recorded 589,479 total confirmed cases and 15,065 deaths.

Life in Sri Lanka has begun returning to normal with the partial lifting

of restrictions on restaurants, supermarkets, cinemas and weddings. But authorities have maintained strict restrictions on [public transport](#) and they discourage public gatherings.

Face masks and social distancing in public are still mandatory and police take [legal action](#) against anyone who fails to comply.

Nearly 64% of Sri Lanka's 22 million people have been fully vaccinated, and about 20% have received boosters.

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