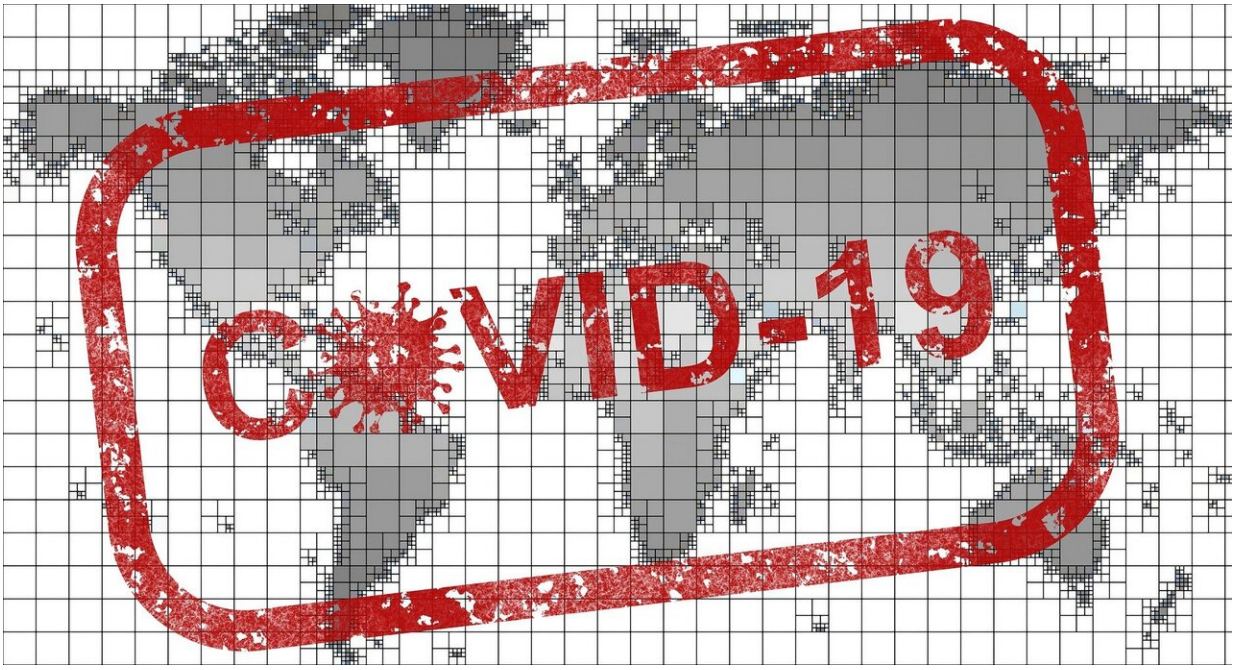
Australia offers fourth COVID shot to over-30s

July 7 2022



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Australia will offer a fourth COVID-19 vaccine to everyone over 30, health authorities said Thursday, as hospitals bulge with patients in a winter wave of infections.

The government said it is recommending a fourth jab for over 50s—but also offering it to everyone over 30 despite benefits to the younger age

group being unclear.

It followed a recommendation by the top immunization advisory body, which said it recognized younger people might want a winter booster dose, even though its impact for them "is uncertain but likely to be limited".

Australia had previously recommended a fourth COVID shot only to people over 65 as well as to vulnerable groups, including those with weakened immune systems.

As new, more infectious Omicron variants BA.4 and BA.5 race through the population, the number of Australian hospital patients with COVID has jumped by more than 1,000 in a month to about 3,900, with 140 people now in intensive care.

"This is placing real pressure on our health and hospital systems," Health Minister Mark Butler told a news conference as he announced the decision.

More than 95 percent of people over the age of 16 are fully vaccinated in Australia, where few people now wear a mask or take measures to socially distance.

As restrictions are gradually dismantled in a country that previously shut its international borders for nearly 20 months to exclude the virus, Australia this week dropped all vaccine certificate requirements for foreign visitors.

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