# France approves vaccines for COVID Omicron sub-variants

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France's health authority said Tuesday it had approved three new vaccines against the prevalent Omicron sub-variants of the COVID-19 virus, in a bid to prevent a jump in infections as colder weather

approaches.

The so-called "bivalent: shots, approved by the European Medicines Agency earlier this month, target the BA.1, BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron variants, now responsible for the bulk of new cases since the outbreak began worldwide in early 2020.

French authorities are urging at-risk patients—including those over 60 or adults with pre-existing conditions—to get the bivalent vaccines as part of its booster campaign.

"The number of infections has again started rising in the past few days," the HAS health authority said, noting that the BA.5 sub-variant was causing the most new cases.

The new vaccine targeting the highly contagious BA.4 and BA.5 types is made by Pfizer and BioNTech, while jabs from Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna are for BA.1.

The jabs are new versions of the original vaccines against the original SARS-CoV-2 strain of coronavirus that sparked a global pandemic killing thousands and forcing drastic lockdowns that wreaked havoc on economies.

France has recorded just under 155,000 deaths since the outbreak began, and around 80 percent of the population has now had a full initial round of vaccination.

But while COVID hospitalizations have dropped from their peak, authorities are again urging people to wear masks in crowded or confined places, though they are no longer mandatory.

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