

Coronavirus restrictions will remain if large numbers refuse vaccine, warns UK taskforce

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Many Britons say they will refuse to have a coronavirus vaccine. (Getty Images)



[Coronavirus](#) restrictions will remain in place if large numbers of people refuse to take a COVID-19 vaccine, a UK taskforce has warned.

There are fears that millions of Britons may opt out of being vaccinated for coronavirus, with many swayed by debunked anti-vax claims spread online.

A number of scientific studies have debunked previous claims by anti-vaxxers, including the [false claim that the MMR jab can cause autism](#).

But two recent surveys show a large proportion of Britons are either against a coronavirus vaccine or unsure about taking one.

On Monday, the government announced that it had signed deals with pharmaceutical companies to [secure 90 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines](#).

Auto

High (HD)

Medium

Low

Captions will look like this

- Presets
- Text
- background
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- Georgia
- Palatino Linotype
- Times New Roman
- Arial
- Arial Black
- Comic Sans MS
- Impact
- Lucida Sans Unicode
- Tahoma
- Trebuchet MS
- Verdana
- Courier New
- Lucida Console

- 100% (opaque)
- 75% (transparency)
- 50% (transparency)
- 25% (transparency)

Captions will look like this

Coronavirus treatment hailed a 'breakthrough'



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An experimental coronavirus treatment has been hailed a “breakthrough” in the fight against the outbreak. Southampton-based biotech firm Synairgen tested the inhaled protein interferon beta on 101 patients across nine UK hospitals. Preliminary results reveal those given the treatment were 79% less likely to develop particularly severe disease, which could require ventilation, than the patients on placebo. The interferon beta group was also at least twice as likely to recover to the point where their everyday activities were unaffected by the illness, according to Synairgen. The firm also claimed interferon beta led to “significant” reductions in breathlessness – a key symptom of severe infection, and cut the time spent in hospital by a third – from an average of nine days to six.

That’s on top of 100 million doses of an Oxford University vaccine being developed by the company AstraZeneca. The findings from its first human trials, published on Monday, [showed its vaccine is safe and induces an immune reaction.](#)

Kate Bingham, chair of the government’s vaccine taskforce, criticised those backing anti-vaxxers.

“Vaccination has been an incredibly positive force for good in global society and they are not helping themselves or others by pushing an anti-vax message,” she said.

Bingham said ‘if large numbers refuse to have it, I think yes there is an issue.’”

She added: "We are now living in a world where we don't have millions of children dying in childhood.

"The last case of smallpox was in the 1970s. Polio is now very rare.

"Vaccination has had a massively positive benefit to society and if we get large numbers of people vaccinated then the restrictions we are all currently facing will stop and we will return to normal.

"But conversely, if large numbers of people of the right cohort, those who are at most at risk of COVID infection, do not get vaccinated, then the restrictions will have to remain and we will not be returning to normal until the vaccination is in place."

Asked if the UK should introduce compulsory coronavirus vaccinations, she said: "That is a matter for the politicians, not for me."

Bingham said on Monday she is hopeful a coronavirus vaccine will be available by the end of the year.

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Boris Johnson said on Monday he could not be 100% confident a coronavirus vaccine will be ready this year or next year. (PA)

Boris Johnson said he could not be "100% confident" that a vaccine would be available this year or next year.

He said: "Obviously I'm hopeful, I've got my fingers crossed but to say that I'm 100% confident that we will get a vaccine this year – or indeed next year – is, alas, just an exaggeration, we are not there yet.

"It may be that the vaccine is going to come riding over the hill like the cavalry, but we just can't count on it right now."

Two weeks ago, a YouGov survey revealed that [almost a third of Britons may not take up a vaccine](#) for coronavirus.

A separate survey published on Sunday by ORB International, which works with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, showed that 27% of Britons either don't know if they will have the vaccine or are definitely ruling it out.

Coronavirus: what happened today

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