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‘This is our life from now on’: Top Israel doctor warns population to get ready for fourth vaccine shot

Israel’s “coronavirus czar” has warned citizens to be prepared for ongoing trips to vaccination centres or risk being locked out of public sites.

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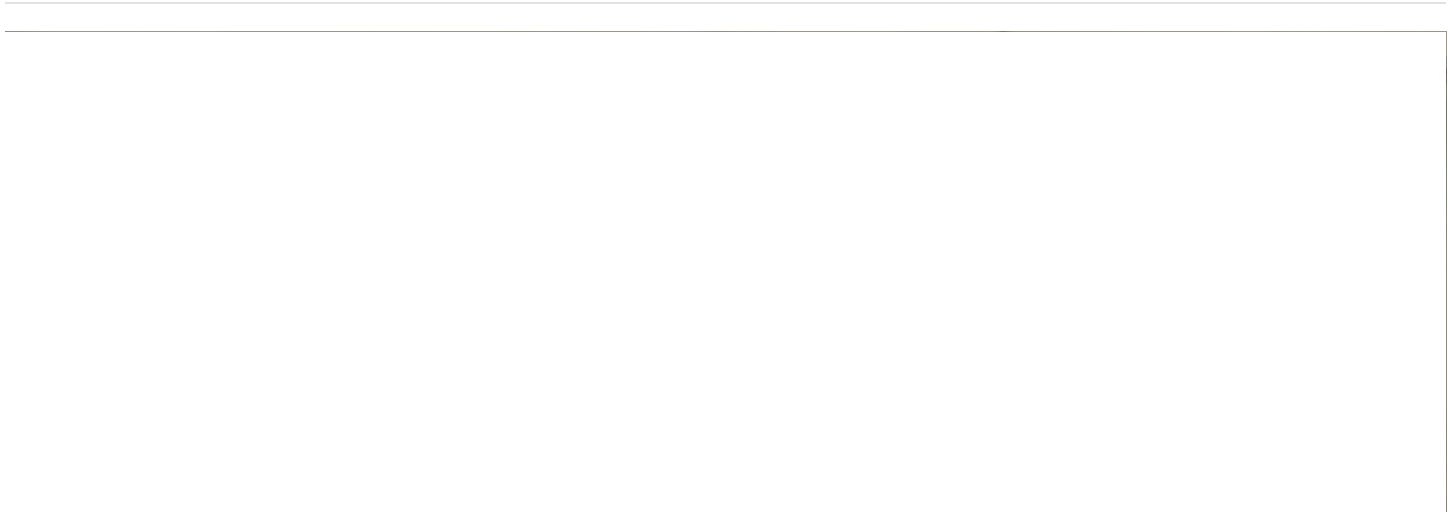
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Huge Covid-19 surge in vaxxed nation



Israel on Sunday began offering a booster shot to anyone who has been fully vaccinated as long as five months have passed since they received the second dose. Adam Reed reports.

Israel's coronavirus commissioner has weighed in on the grim reality of the ever-evolving global pandemic, warning citizens to be prepared for ongoing vaccine booster shots as new variants and outbreaks emerge.

Once the poster boy for vaccination rates, the middle-eastern nation now has a rolling average of 9300 daily cases. Israel has now broken a grim new record – the country with the highest seven day average of new cases per million.

Infectious diseases experts have said Israel may prove that the effectiveness of vaccines do indeed wane over time.

“Given that that the virus is here and will continue to be here, we also need to prepare for a fourth injection,” Salman Zarka, dubbed Israel's “coronavirus czar”, told Kan public radio in Israel.

Mr Zarka, who took over the commissioner's job from Nachman Ash in July, also said the next booster shot may be modified to better protect against new variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid-19, such as the highly infectious Delta strain.

“This is our life from now on, in waves,” he said.

“It seems that if we learn the lessons from the fourth wave, we must consider the [possibility of subsequent] waves with the new variants, such as the new one from South America.

“And thinking about this and the waning of the vaccines and the antibodies, it seems every few months – it could be once a year or five or six months – we'll need another shot.”

Israel's Health Ministry last week also announced the nation's “Green Pass” system – a “passport” style document allowing entry into public places for the vaccinated – will expire six months after the holder received their second or third dose.

Mr Zarka said September was going to be a “challenging month” for the country with children now back to school and a major religious holiday approaching.

He said he expected a further jump in cases and said some restrictions on mass events should be considered. But he didn't support wholesale lockdowns.



A health worker is seen as Israelis receive the third doses of coronavirus vaccines.

“There is some optimism but ... any gathering has potential for more infections, so cautious optimism is a better description,” Prof Zarka told the [Ynet](#) news site.

On Friday, the Health Ministry reported 11,269 new coronavirus infections in the previous 24-hour period, a slight reduction from Wednesday’s record-breaking day of 11,274 infections.

“This is a very clear warning sign for the rest of the world,” Dr Ran Balicer of Clalit Health Services, one of Israel’s main healthcare providers, told [Science](#) magazine last month

“If it can happen here, it can probably happen everywhere.”

However, the country’s politicians are insistent no new lockdown will be introduced and have pointed out that despite the surge in cases, serious illness and death among vaccinated Israelis remains low.

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has already made clear another countrywide lockdown will “destroy the future of the country”.

After reopening society following a successful vaccination campaign, the country is now being forced to reintroduce caps on public gatherings and bump up hospital staff in preparation for another



'People were celebrating the end of Covid and this was probably too early.'





The WHO has rejected the call for booster doses with so many around the world still struggling to get their first jab.

Vaccination rates in Israel surged between December and March but then began to plateau after around 50 per cent of the total population, not just adults, had received two jabs.

In the six months since March, inoculation rates have been sluggish. [Today only around 60 per cent of Israelis in total have had two doses](#) leaving millions still with no protection.

It has now slipped to 22 in the global vaccination ladder, with the UK, China, Canada, Ireland, Spain and Denmark among others having vaccinated more residents.

Ben-Gurion University's Professor Davidovitch, who is a member of the nation's coronavirus response committee Covid-19, said the nation had jumped the gun after reaching their magic target.

"People were celebrating the end of Covid and this was probably too early," he told the ABC.

However, the WHO has rejected the call for triple (and quadruple) doses with so many around the world still struggling to get their first jab. Underdeveloped countries with existing national health crises have been left behind, with superpowers like the US pledging to send millions of doses to the hardest-hit nations.

"Israel very much respects the World Health Organisation but acts according to local considerations and the interests of Israeli citizens. We help the world a lot," an anonymous Israeli health official told [NPR](#).

"If the UN didn't secure enough vaccines for Chad, Mali, Myanmar and Guatemala, that doesn't mean that Israel shouldn't seek to prevent a pandemic from happening here."

– *With Benedict Brook*