

Reuters Health Information (2021-07-29): Israel to offer Pfizer booster shots to people over 60 - Israeli news reports

CATEGORIES

Regulatory

ABSTRACT

By Reuters Staff

JERUSALEM (Reuters) - Israel will begin offering a third shot of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to people over 60, Israel's Kan public radio and Channel 13 TV said on Thursday.

The campaign, a bid to fend off the coronavirus Delta variant, will effectively turn Israel into a testing ground for the booster before approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Pfizer said on Wednesday it believes people need a third dose to keep protection against the coronavirus high. The company says it could apply for U.S. emergency authorization for booster shots as early as August.

The company posted a non-peer reviewed study (<https://bit.ly/3zHAftF>) on the medRxiv website on Wednesday suggesting the vaccine's efficacy declines over six months and had dropped to around 84% effectiveness, from a peak of 96% between seven days and two months after trial participants received their second dose.

But the study also showed a third shot boosts neutralizing antibodies against the Delta variant by 11-fold in older people.

Kan and Channel 13 said the director-general of Israel's health ministry informed the heads of health maintenance organisations that have been administering the two-dose Pfizer vaccine that they could provide, as of Sunday, booster shots for people over the age of 60.

The ministry said earlier that it would make an official announcement about a booster campaign later in the day.

Since the Delta variant began spreading in Israel in June, the health ministry has twice reported a drop in the vaccine's effectiveness against infection and a slight decrease in its protection against severe disease.

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