

Germany urges vaccine shots; warns of fall COVID-19 surge

September 4 2021, by Kirsten Grieshaber



In this Saturday, May 15, 2021 file photo, people queue at a vaccination centre in Ebersberg near Munich, Germany. Germany's top health official has on Saturday, Sept. 4 called on more citizens to get vaccinated. Health Minister Jens Spahn tweeted that "we need at least 5 million vaccinations for a safe autumn and winter." Credit: AP Photo/Matthias Schrader, file

Germany's top health official is urging more citizens to get vaccinated, warning Saturday that if the vaccination numbers don't go up the country's hospitals may get overwhelmed by COVID-19 patients toward the end of the year.

"We need at least 5 million vaccinations for a safe autumn and winter," Health Minister Jens Spahn tweeted.

More than 61% of the German population, or 50.9 million people, are fully vaccinated, but that's less than in other European countries. The daily vaccination rate has been dropping for weeks, while new infection cases have been going up again.

On Saturday, Germany's disease control agency reported 10,835 new COVID-19 cases, up from 10,303 a week ago.

"The number of people who have been vaccinated is too low to prevent an overburdening of the [health](#) system," the [health minister](#) told daily Hannoversche Zeitung. He said currently 90% of COVID-19 patients in [intensive care](#) are unvaccinated, the German news agency dpa reported.

The head of Germany's Association for Intensive and Emergency Medicine also warned of a strong increase of COVID-19 cases in the hospital's intensive care wards in the fall, if the vaccinations don't go up.

Christian Karagiannidis told the Augsburg Allgemeine newspaper: "If we don't get up the vaccination rate significantly by October, we will have a really strong increase of coronavirus cases in intensive care in the fall."

Berlin virologist Christian Drosten said the idea of "a relaxed autumn is a risky assumption" and warned that contact restrictions may have to be implemented again if new infections keep going up, dpa reported.

Drosten said some Germans don't appreciate vaccines enough because the earlier phases of the pandemic were less devastating in Germany than in other European countries.

"They have had a horrible experience as an entire society," Drosten said of other European countries. "Many deaths, a real lockdown, where one was only allowed to go out for shopping for a reason, and where the streets were patrolled by the military."

In Germany, 92,325 people have died of COVID-19, according to the Robert Koch Institute. Other European countries have seen many more deaths even though their populations are lower: Britain has had over 133,000; Italy had 129,000 and France has seen over 115,000 dead.

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