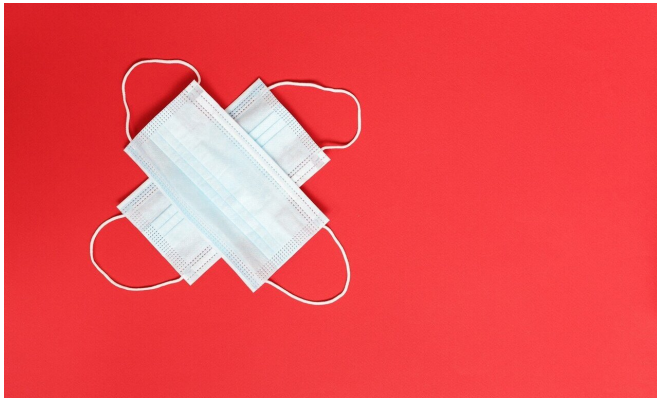


Japan residents to get free COVID-19 vaccine

2 December 2020



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Japan will give free coronavirus vaccines to all of its residents under a bill passed Wednesday, as the nation battles record numbers of daily cases.

The bill, which says the government will cover all [vaccine](#) costs for Japan's 126 million residents, was approved by the upper house of parliament, having cleared the powerful lower house.

The country has secured COVID-19 vaccines for 60 million people from pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, and for a further 25 million people from biotech firm Moderna.

It has also confirmed it will receive 120 million doses of AstraZeneca's vaccine.

Pfizer and Moderna are already seeking emergency-use approval in the United States and Europe, after clinical tests showed their jabs were effective.

The bill's passage comes two weeks after Japan's [prime minister](#) said the country was on "maximum alert" over the virus, and as medics warn hospitals are on the brink of collapse.

Japan has seen a comparatively small COVID-19 outbreak overall, with around 2,100 deaths and 150,000 cases, and has not imposed the strict lockdowns seen elsewhere.

But it is now facing a third wave of the disease, reporting record numbers of daily infections nationwide in recent weeks.

Tokyo's governor has urged residents to avoid non-essential outings and asked businesses serving alcohol to shut early, although there is no enforcement mechanism for these recommendations.

The [national government](#) has also decided to allow individual regions to opt out of a controversial domestic tourism campaign.

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