

Spain to start virus vaccinations Dec 27

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Spain will start immunising people against the coronavirus on December 27, a day after it receives the first doses of a vaccine, Health Minister Salvador Illa said on Friday.

The announcement comes a day after European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen announced the EU would begin inoculations against COVID-19 with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine between December 27 and 29, saying it was "Europe's moment" in the battle against the virus.

The European Medicines Agency is expected to decide whether or not to approve the Pfizer vaccine on December 21—a week earlier than initially expected.

"This is the beginning of the end of the pandemic, not the end, so we must continue to keep our guard up," Illa told a news conference.

Spain plans to vaccinate [elderly residents](#) and staff in nursing homes first, then [health workers](#) and other [vulnerable people](#) such as the elderly and people with underlying [health conditions](#).

The government expects to have around 15-20 million people out of its population of 47 million vaccinated against the virus by June.

The health minister called on Spaniards to be very careful over the Christmas holidays, warning there had been a "very worrying" change in infection trends, with a rise in cases after several weeks of declines.

"We must adopt adequate measures to change this trend," he added.

Several regional governments, which are responsible for [health care](#), have in recent days announced tighter virus restrictions for the holidays to try to curb the rise in infections.

Spain has been one of Europe's worst-hit countries, with the virus infecting more than 1.7 million people and causing nearly 49,000 deaths.

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