

Spain broadens use of AstraZeneca jab to adults under age 65

March 22 2021, by Aritz Parra



90 Maribel Elizondo, left, sits as 84 year old Luisa Tollar, has her hair set by hair dresser Gloria Cerdan in the hairdressers at Ibaneta nursing home, in the small village of Erro, around 30 kms (18 miles) from Pamplona, northern Spain, Monday, March 22, 2021. Every week, on Monday, hairdresser Gloria Cerdan attends to residents at the nursing home. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)

Spain's health minister says the country will resume the use of the AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine on Wednesday by extending it to adults under age 65.

Authorities will consider giving it to older people after they analyze a U.S. study that AstraZeneca said showed the jab provides strong protection to all adults, Spanish Health Minister Carolina Darias said Monday.

Disclosing the results of a long-anticipated study, the British-Swedish drugmaker said its vaccine was 79% effective overall at preventing symptomatic cases of COVID-19, including in older people, and that none of the more than 30,000 volunteers in the U.S. study were hospitalized or developed severe COVID-19.

Speaking to reporters during a weekly briefing, Darias said Spanish officials need more time to analyze all the information from the study before broadening the use of the vaccine, something that [several regions and doctors have demanded for weeks](#).

Like several other European countries, [Spain stopped administering the AstraZeneca vaccine last week](#). The European Union's drug regulator later declared the vaccine safe and with no obvious links to a few dozen cases of rare blood clots.

Central and regional health officials in Spain cleared the way for resuming shots of the AstraZeneca vaccine and also approved administering the vaccine to people ages 18-65.



90 year old Maribel Elizondo, sits in the hair salon at Ibaneta nursing home, in the small village of Erro, around 30 kms (18 miles) from Pamplona, northern Spain, Monday, March 22, 2021. Every week, on Monday, hairdresser Gloria Cerdan attends to the residents at the nursing home. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)

"Vaccines are safe, effective and they save lives," Darias said.

Citing a lack of studies on its performance in older people, Spain had previously restricted its use in adults under 55 years old.

The health minister also warned that the latest pandemic data suggests another sharp increase in infections could be around the corner. Authorities are trying to free up hospital intensive care units treating

COVID-19 patients.

Official data released on Monday showed 16,471 new confirmed cases and 633 more virus-related deaths since the Health Ministry's last update on Thursday, bringing the pandemic's totals to 3.2 million cases and over 73,000 deaths.

Although the 14-day new infection incidence, a key variable, stood at the same level of 128 cases per 100,000 residents as last week, Darias said that other data showed that an increase is imminent.

"The virus is not defeated, it is within our power to avoid a rebound and therefore a fourth wave," Darias said.

Spain has pledged to vaccinate 70% of its adult population, or 33 million people, by the end of the summer. So far, 2.1 million residents have been fully vaccinated. Over 5.5 million, including many over age 80, are awaiting their second shots.

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Citation: Spain broadens use of AstraZeneca jab to adults under age 65 (2021, March 22) retrieved 27 January 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-03-spain-upper-age-limit-astrazeneca.html>

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