



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on September 7, 2021

Israel Set to Offer Fourth Dose of COVID Vaccine, Additional Shots Considered

Like some notorious partygoer, Israel is calling for more shots. That is, COVID shots. The shots should be reformulated to target the new COVID variants, and one must get them more often. Now, just a little over a month since starting to offer its general population a third dose of the Pfizer vaccine, Israeli top officials say a fourth dose may be needed soon.

Speaking to Kan public radio, as [reported](#) by the *Times of Israel*, Israeli national pandemic coordinator Salman Zarka said on Saturday, “Given that the virus is here and will continue to be here, we also need to prepare for a fourth injection.” Zarka mentioned the fourth jab will be modified in accordance with SARS-CoV-2’s recent mutations, but did not provide any timeline on when it should be taken. “This is our life from now on, in waves,” Zarka added.

The outlet reminded the readers that Zarka had made similar [comments](#) last month, when he said the country must consider the possibility of subsequent waves of vaccination with the new COVID variants. Given the waning effectiveness of the vaccines and the antibodies that they induce, “it seems every few months — it could be once a year or five or six months — we’ll need another shot,” he said. The new vaccines should hit the market by late 2021-early 2022, per the top COVID official.

Zarka’s observations echo the statement of Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, who [said](#) in late July that much like a flu vaccine, the COVID shot “needs to be renewed from time to time.” On a separate note, earlier this year, all three U.S.-authorized coronavirus vaccine manufacturers, comparing their products to the flu shots, [signaled](#) they were working on annual booster shot programs, even before the Delta strain appeared.

Though it is one of the world’s [most vaccinated](#) countries, Israel saw a sharp spike in COVID cases over the summer, half of which were reported in fully vaccinated individuals, as it was revealed that the vaccines’ strength starts to fade with time. Local media [reported](#) that the drop in efficacy was rather dramatic: Based on cases from June 20 to July 17, those who were fully vaccinated had only a 40.5-percent chance of avoiding symptomatic COVID, but an 88-percent chance of avoiding hospitalization. It was also observed the decline in protection was rapid: Among those who were inoculated in January, there was only a 16-percent effectiveness against being infected, compared to 44 percent for those vaccinated in February, 67 percent for those who got jabbed in March, and 75 percent in April.



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In this situation, first in the world, Israel has decided to offer the third dose of COVID vaccine in a bid to curb the spread of the “highly contagious” Delta variant, even though it was [admitted](#) there is no data yet to predict the duration of the boosters’ efficacy.

The COVID booster campaign began on August 1, and those over the age of 60 were the first to receive the booster. The eligibility age was then gradually dropped to [include](#) those older than 30, and last week, the country’s health minister [granted](#) access to a third shot to everyone over the age of 12 who had received their second dose at least five months earlier.

As of Friday, over 2.5 million Israelis had received the third dose, per the *Times*.

As the booster campaign unrolled, Israeli Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz [warned](#) that the government might cancel the so-called [Green Pass](#) of people not inoculated with three doses of the coronavirus vaccine. Such a pass is required to access “nonessential” public venues, including cultural and sporting events, restaurants, cafes, gyms, hotels, and movie theaters, regardless of the number of participants or the number of people present there. Horowitz explained:

This is simply because, in terms of its effectiveness, the vaccine is valid only for a period of five or six months. After about half a year, you have to get a third dose. Otherwise, the vaccine loses its power. The Green Pass testifies that a person is safe in a certain way. So the moment we know that the vaccine loses its effectiveness after a certain period, there’s no justification for giving a Green Pass to someone who hasn’t gotten another dose.

Getting a booster shot five months after the second dose would extend the expiration of a Green Pass by another six months, per Horowitz. Therefore, it is probable Israelis will have to receive COVID boosters twice a year.

Bloomberg recently [reported](#) that Israeli data on COVID boosters is being heavily relied on by the Biden administration’s COVID response team. In the end of August, President Joe Biden [stated](#) that, following Israel’s example, Americans, too, may soon be offered booster shots five months after their initial inoculation. Israel’s Health Ministry [said](#) last week the ministry had been asked by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to brief its advisors on Israeli rollout of booster shots.

As a result of a seemingly politically motivated booster-shot campaign in the United States, two senior vaccine regulators at the FDA [have resigned](#) last week, citing, among other reasons, lack of scientific research to justify offering boosters to the general population.

White House Health Advisor Dr. Anthony Fauci, who backs the plan to start offering boosters as early as the week of September 20, [said](#) third doses will likely be needed for people to be considered “fully vaccinated” against COVID.



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