

[Home](#)[News](#)[Sport](#)[Weather](#)[Home](#) | [InDepth](#) | [Israel-Gaza war](#) | [War in Ukraine](#) | [Climate](#) | [UK](#) | [World](#) |[More](#)[Business](#) | [Politics](#) | [Culture](#)[UK](#) | [England](#) | [N. Ireland](#) | [Scotland](#) | [Alba](#) | [Wales](#) | [Cymru](#) | [Isle of Man](#) | [Guernsey](#) | [Jersey](#) |[Local News](#)

'We're travelling on a one-way road to freedom' - PM

22 February 2021

Summary

Boris Johnson hails the "unparalleled" vaccine effort that has meant people "can begin safely to restart our lives with confidence"

The PM has outlined his four-step plan to release England from lockdown - Scotland, Wales and NI will set out their own approaches

He says it is the time to begin replacing the protection afforded by lockdown with the protection that comes from vaccines

Step one of the roadmap, on 8 March, will see schools in England reopening and two people allowed to meet outdoors for a chat

From 29 March, outdoor gatherings of either six people or two households will be allowed and outdoor sports can resume

The PM says step two on 12 April - when outdoor hospitality, shops, hairdressers and gyms will reopen - will be a "big moment"

Step three would start on 17 May with most social contact rules lifted, as well as limited mixing indoors

The prime minister hopes that step four, from 21 June, would see the end of all legal limits on social contact

England's chief medical officer Prof Chris Whitty says the number of positive tests "is continuing to fall" but rates are "still very high"

Live Reporting

Edited by Rob Corp and James Clarke

< 1 2 3 4 ... 7 >

19:29 22 February 2021

Vallance: Need five-week gap 'so we're not flying blind'

UK government scientific adviser Sir Patrick Vallance says the five-week gap between the steps to ease lockdown is important to "make sure we're not flying blind".

 Share

19:26 22 February 2021

Whitty on vaccine effectiveness



Whitty says "we anticipate that if the vaccines are effective... the death rate will start to fall".

So how effective are those vaccines?

Whitty takes us through some studies.

He says one done in people who are healthcare workers - young adults under 65 - showed the vaccine led to a 72% reduction in the number of people who got in an infection after 21 days.

This increased further when they had a second dose, he says.

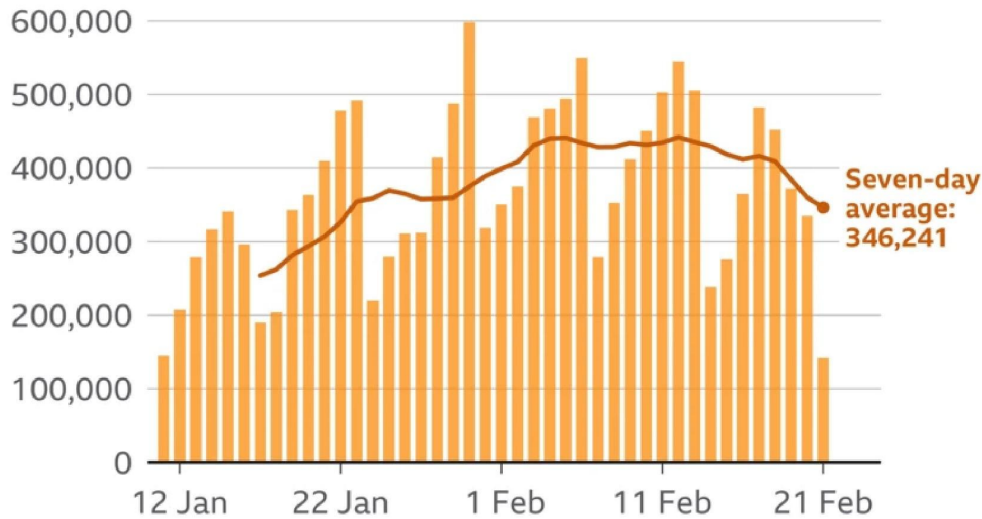
Speaking about a second study, he says: "We are confident from these data that the effectiveness of this vaccine in older people in reducing hospitalisations is greater than 75%".

He says studies show three things:

- "These vaccines... provide a very substantial level of protection from the first dose"
- "That protection continues over a prolonged period beyond 21 days"
- "We must make sure that those who have a first vaccine go on to get a second vaccine"

More than 17 million first doses given

Daily first vaccine doses administered by date reported



Source: Gov.uk dashboard. Data to 21 Feb

BBC

[Share](#)

19:20 22 February 2021

Chris Whitty takes us through the slides

Whitty says the number of people testing positive has "fallen and is continuing to fall", but the rates are "still very high".

On hospital admissions, he says "there is a significant fall that is continuing, but the rates are still high".

He points out that the number of deaths is "falling, and falling steadily".

He says this is almost entirely down to people following the lockdown rules in all four nations.

"But we have had this really extraordinary rollout of vaccinations," he adds.

[Share](#)

19:18 22 February 2021

Spring and summer will be seasons of hope, says PM



Just before Prof Whitty began speaking, the prime minister finished his prepared remarks by saying he understands those who want to go faster in easing the restrictions but says it is important to remain "humble in the face of nature".

He says spring and summer should be "seasons of hope" from which "we will not go back".

 Share

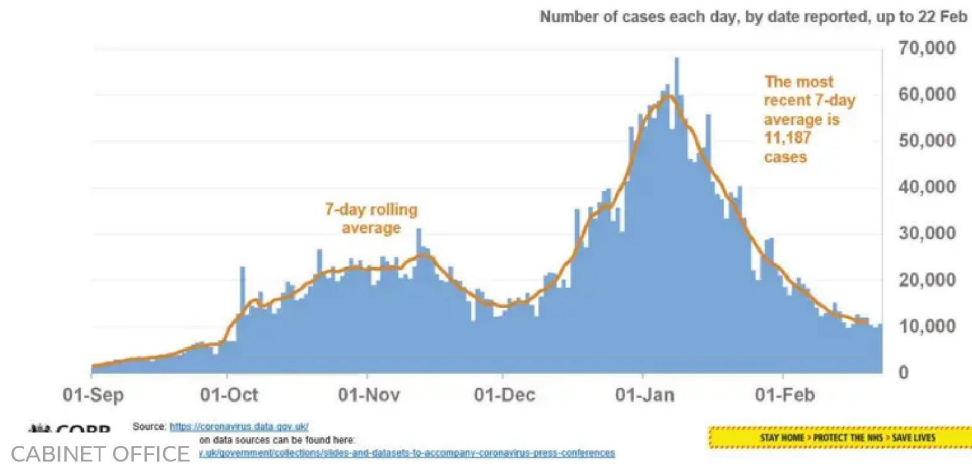
19:17 22 February 2021

What's on the slides?

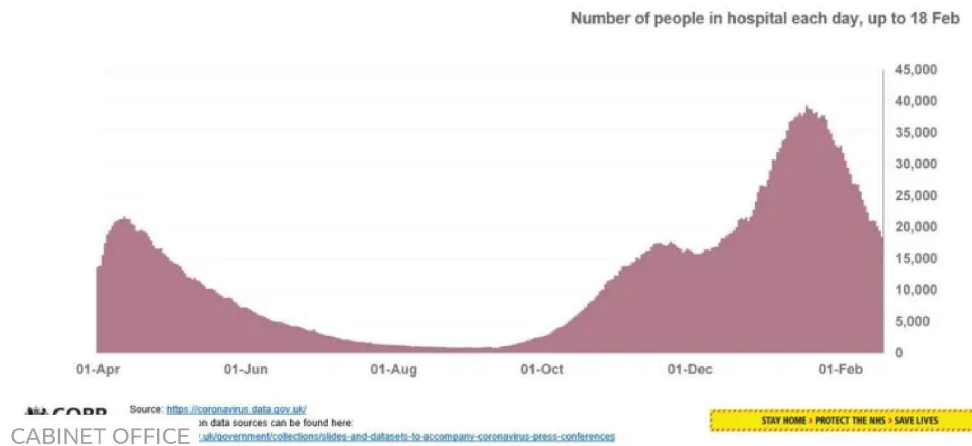
Prof Chris Whitty, England's chief medical officer, has started speaking.

Here are some of the charts the government advisers are showing us this evening.

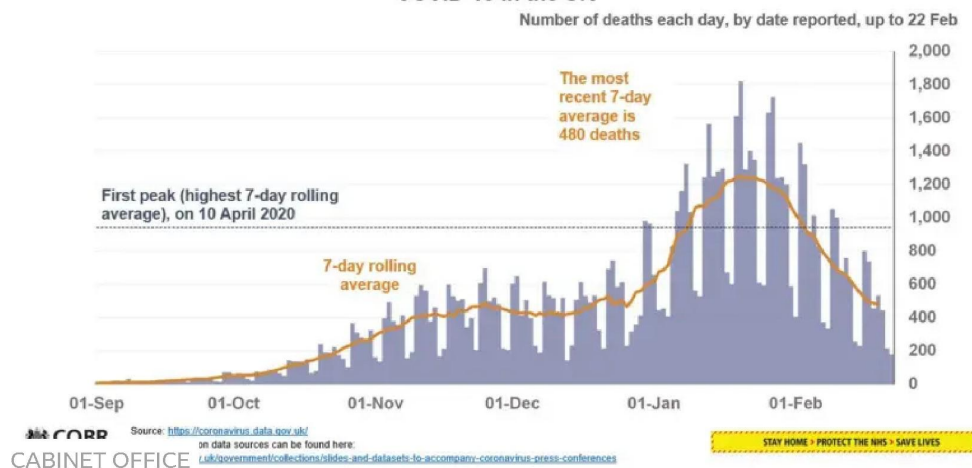
The number of people testing positive for COVID-19 in the UK

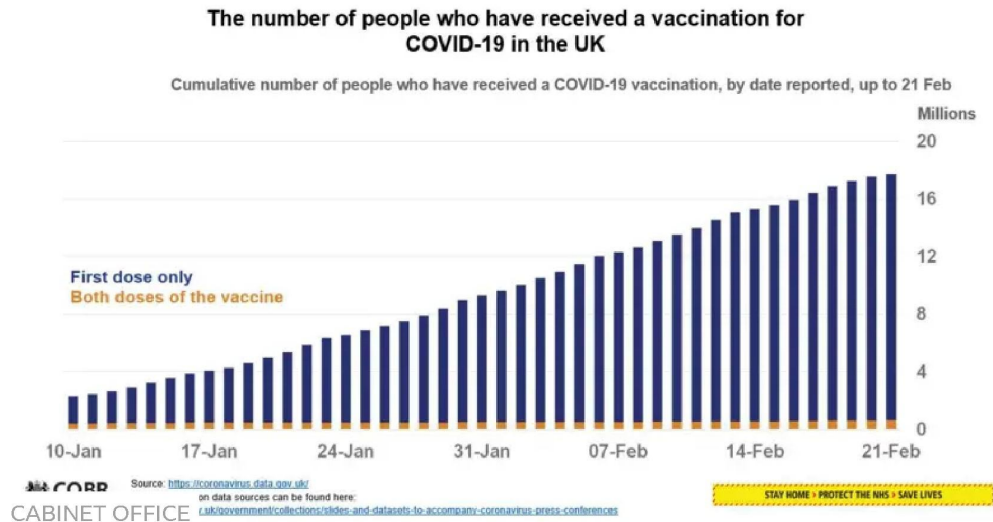


The number of people in hospital with COVID-19 in the UK



The number of deaths of people who had a positive test result for COVID-19 in the UK





Share

19:15 22 February 2021

Johnson runs through easing of restrictions

Boris Johnson runs through the road map to ease the lockdown in England that he set out in the House of Commons earlier - you can read a summary below.

He says 12 April - when outdoor hospitality and shops will reopen - will be a "big moment".

He adds the government will do "whatever it takes" to protect jobs throughout the pandemic.

Share

19:12 22 February 2021

We're on a 'one-way road to freedom' - PM

Boris Johnson says the "unparalleled" programme of vaccination means "we're now travelling on a one-way road to freedom".

But he cautions that no vaccine has ever been "100% effective," meaning "we have to be realistic" that "we will not be able to eradicate this disease".



19:10 22 February 2021

Johnson begins Downing Street briefing

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has emerged, and gets this evening's press conference under way.

You can watch live using the stream above - and we'll bring you the latest here.



19:09 22 February 2021

Pubs sector calls for extended support



An industry group says pubs need more help to survive the route out of Covid restrictions, warning that thousands of venues could close their doors for good unless more is done.

The British Beer and Pub Association says around three in five pubs will not be able to reopen from 12 April, either because they do not have outdoor space, or not enough to make them commercially viable.

Its chief executive Emma McClarkin said even after all pubs can reopen in May, the business rates holiday and VAT cut for the sector will need to

stay in place for 12-24 months to keep pubs viable.



18:56 22 February 2021

In case you missed it

Ahead of this evening's No 10 press conference at 19:00 GMT, here's a summary of the PM's four-part plan for easing England's lockdown, which he laid out to MPs earlier:

STEP ONE

- **From 8 March** - All schools will open with outdoor after-school sports and activities allowed. Recreation in an outdoor public spaces - such as a park - will be allowed between two people, meaning they would be allowed to sit down for a coffee, drink or picnic
- **From 29 March** - Outdoor gatherings of either six people or two households will be allowed. It is understood this will include gatherings in private gardens. Outdoor sports facilities such as tennis or basketball courts will reopen and organised adult and children's sport, such as grassroots football, will also return

Secondary school pupils can access tests and will be required to wear face coverings in classrooms and shared spaces like corridors.

STEP TWO - from 12 April

- Non-essential retail opens, hairdressers and some public buildings like libraries
- Outdoor settings like alcohol takeaways, beer gardens, zoos and theme parks
- Indoor leisure like swimming pools and gyms
- Self-contained holiday accommodation, such as self-catering lets and camp sites
- Wider social contact rules will continue to apply in all settings - meaning no indoor mixing between different households will be allowed.
- Johnson confirmed the end of hospitality curfews - and requirements to eat a substantial meal alongside alcohol.

- He said a review of international leisure travel restrictions would be announced by 12 April at the earliest.
- Funerals continue with up to 30 people, and weddings with up to 15 guests.

STEP THREE - from 17 May

If the data allows, this step will see the "rule of six" abolished for outdoor gatherings, replaced with a limit of 30 people:

- Two households can mix indoors - with the rule of six applied in hospitality settings like pubs
- Cinemas, museums, hotels, performances and sporting events reopen - though social distancing remains
- Up to 10,000 spectators can attend the very largest outdoor seated venues like football stadiums
- Up to 30 people will be able to attend weddings, receptions, funerals and wakes.
- Mr Johnson said this step would also "consider the potential role of Covid status certification" - which could refer to so-called "vaccine passports" - in helping indoor venues to reopen safely.

STEP FOUR - from 21 June

- Before this step, ministers will carry out a review of social distancing and other "long-term measures" designed to reduce transmission, including the "one metre plus" rule and the wearing of face coverings.
- They will also consider whether to lift the "work from home" guidance, which the government says people should continue to follow until the review has been completed.
- The fourth step will potentially see all legal limits on social contact removed, with the final closed sectors of the economy reopened - such as nightclubs.
- The government hopes that - from this date - restrictions on weddings and funerals will also be abolished.

 Share

18:47 22 February 2021

T-minus 15 minutes

It's not long now until UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson talks to the country about his plan for easing England's lockdown.

He'll face questions from the public and from journalists.

Grab your popcorn and we'll take you through all tonight's action from Downing Street.

[!\[\]\(3b71157eab31889e641f7620692f0b92_img.jpg\) Share](#)

18:30 22 February 2021

Downing Street briefing coming up

Earlier, Boris Johnson gave MPs a run-down of what his four-step plan for easing England's lockdown will look like.

He'll be speaking again in about half an hour - to the country, this time, in a Downing Street briefing.

He'll be joined by England's chief medical officer, Prof Chris Whitty, and the government's chief scientific adviser, Patrick Vallance.

Stay tuned...

[!\[\]\(2c272f92eedd646336bf3d1161a690e1_img.jpg\) Share](#)

18:26 22 February 2021

Mixed views on route to reopen live music performance scene



The chief executive of the UK Music trade body says it is "hugely welcome" the government has "set out a clear route to reopen the live music industry".

Jamie Njoku-Goodwin says: "Our world-leading live music scene - ranging from stadium and concert-hall filling acts to emerging solo performers in the local pub - will help lift people's spirits and deliver a huge cultural and economic boost as we emerge from this pandemic.

"While the astounding success of the vaccine rollout means the end of the health emergency is in sight, the economic toll of this pandemic will be with us for a long time to come - making dynamic growth industries like the UK music industry more important than ever.

"The music industry can play a key role in the post-pandemic economic and social recovery, and live music events could be the shot in the arm that Britain needs as we look to bounce back from this pandemic."

But the leader of another music trade organisation, Greg Parmley, chief executive of Live, was less pleased, saying the sector "could be months behind the rest of the economy".

You can read more on his [call for further financial support for the music industry here](#).

 Share

18:16 22 February 2021

Air New Zealand to trial digital 'health passport'



Air New Zealand says it will trial a new **digital health pass** designed to help streamline safe international travel.

The Travel Pass app, developed by the International Air Transport Association (IATA), will store Covid test results and vaccination details in one place that can be shared among airlines and border control agencies. The trial will start in April with flights between Auckland and the Australian city of Sydney.

New Zealand, which has a population of five million, has recorded just over 2,300 cases of Covid-19 and 25 deaths. Early on in the pandemic the country closed its borders entirely to almost all non-citizens or residents, going months without community transmission.

 Share

18:09 22 February 2021

Could some measures remain even after mass vaccination?



Reality Check

Prime Minister Boris Johnson paid tribute to the UK's vaccine rollout saying it has "dramatically changed the odds in our favour".

The government's roadmap document says vaccines have "transformed our efforts to tackle Covid-19" but acknowledges "they will not guarantee

protection for everyone”.

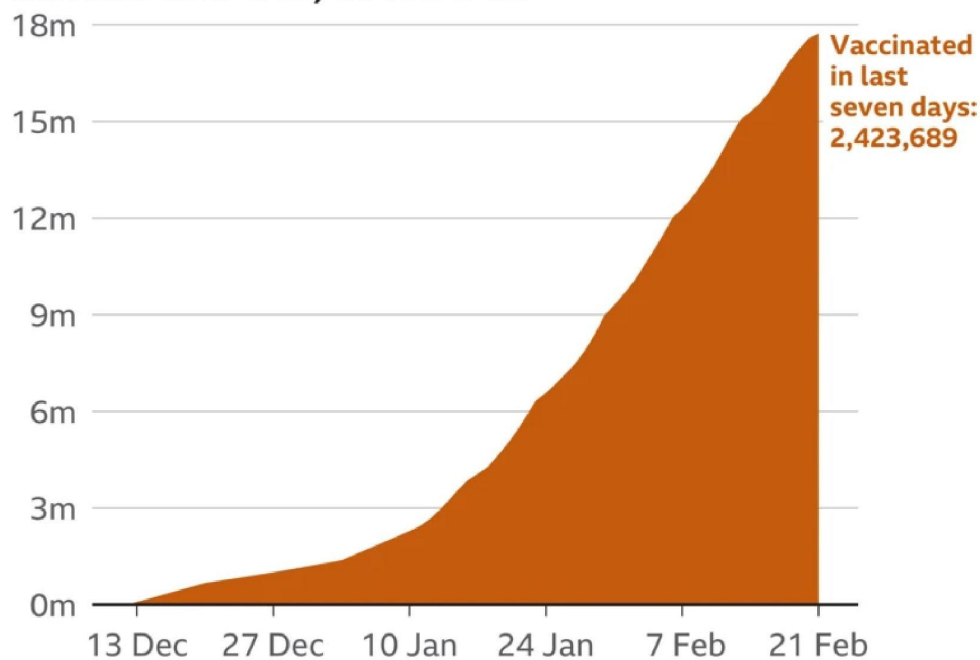
It says this is because vaccines are not authorised for some groups – such as children – and not everyone will take up the offer of a jab. It adds that vaccines won't be 100% effective against infection or against serious illness or death.

The document says that even after the entire adult population is offered the vaccine, not everyone will be protected – it estimates that about a third of the population will either not be protected or not be eligible for the vaccine.

For this reason it says some measures could remain. These could include the mantra of “hands, face and space”, the test and trace system and controls at the borders.

However, they acknowledge that it is still too early to understand the extent to which these measures will be needed.

More than 17m vaccine first doses received across the UK, to 21 Feb



Source: Gov.uk dashboard. Data to 21 Feb

BBC

Share

18:02 22 February 2021

Travel industry encouraged by PM's road map



Caroline Davies
BBC Transport Correspondent

The aviation industry has reacted positively to the news the government will look at how to restart international travel.

Many in the industry had feared the sector would be left off the prime minister's road map, but earlier he announced a Global Travel Taskforce will present a report on 12 April with recommendations on how to return to international travel.

The government will then determine when international travel should resume, no earlier than 17 May. This doesn't mean that travel will be permitted from mid-May as the government have said this will depend on the prevalence and location of concerning variants and progress of vaccine rollouts here and abroad as well as death rates and hospital admissions.

Sean Doyle, British Airways' CEO, says: "It is critical we start looking at a way to restart travel and we are pleased the government has acknowledged that.

"We support a data-led approach that protects public health. We want to work with the government's taskforce on a roadmap now to ensure that aviation is in a strong position to support the UK as we emerge from the pandemic."



The focus is now on ensuring the industry has a long enough lead time if it is to restart.

Tim Alderslade of the trade body Airlines UK, says: "We're grateful to the prime minister and department for transport for providing the clarity the

whole sector was looking for that international travel can reopen this summer, as soon as it is safe to do so.

“We now look forward working with ministers and as part of the proposed taskforce on the practical detail of how current restrictions – which are amongst the toughest anywhere in the world – can be removed, and how the sector can be provided with as much advance notice as possible before any restart.”

Share

17:50 22 February 2021

Hong Kong's leader vaccinated



Kerry Allen

BBC Monitoring, Chinese Media Analyst



EPA

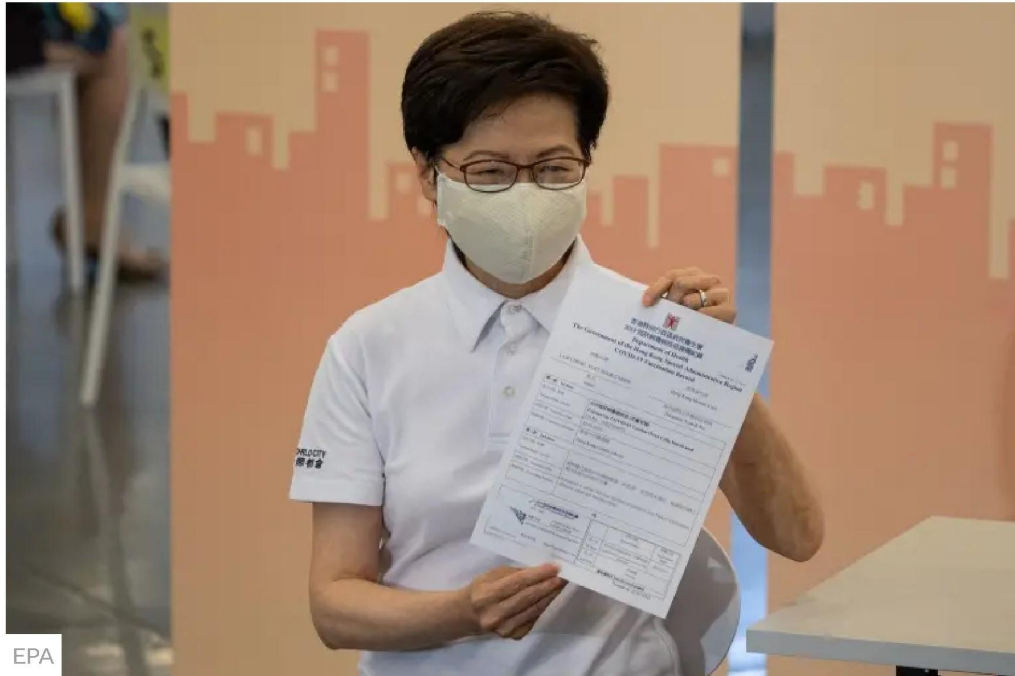
| Footage of Carrie Lam getting vaccinated aired live on local TV.

Hong Kong's leader has been vaccinated ahead of the city beginning its mass inoculation drive on Friday.

Chief Executive Carrie Lam received her first dose of the Chinese Sinovac vaccine along with senior ministers in Hong Kong's government.

She told journalists: "I have to assure every Hong Kong citizen that the government is very serious about the safety, efficacy and quality of

vaccines. We will only use vaccines which meet those high standards before we put it into the government vaccination programme."



EPA

| Carrie Lam shows her vaccination record after receiving the jab

Hong Kong is set to begin its vaccination drive on 26 February. It will begin by prioritising medical workers and front-line transportation workers, care home staff and people over the age of 60.

Approximately one million doses of the Sinovac vaccine arrived in Hong Kong last week, and doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is expected to arrive by the end of the month.

Hong Kong has a population of approximately 7.4 million people.

[Share](#)

17:41 22 February 2021

US prepares to mark 500,000 deaths



We've been focused on developments in England this afternoon but US President Joe Biden will lead a candle-lighting ceremony and a moment of silence tonight as the country prepares to mark the grim milestone of 500,000 deaths of people with coronavirus.

The ceremony is due to take place at the White House at 18:15 (23:15 GMT) and will also involve First Lady Jill Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff, officials say.

The US has seen the highest number of infections - more than 28 million - and the highest death toll of any country in the world.

Since taking office, President Biden has signed a raft of new measures including boosting vaccinations and testing. He has pleaded with Americans to wear masks and warned that the death toll could continue to rise.

The widely criticised handling of the pandemic and the vaccination programme under the Trump administration was a key issue in last year's presidential election.

 Share

17:34 22 February 2021

Fact-checking PM's claim about Europe and vaccines



Reality Check

Best of the BBC



The impact lockdown had on children

iPlayer



Britain's biggest football hooligans

Sounds



Brand-new gritty drama with Sean Bean

iPlayer



From treasure hunters to most wanted

Sounds

Home

News

Sport

Terms of

Contact 1

Labour's Emma-Lewell Buck asks why people will have to wait until mid-April to meet up with other people outside in a pub or restaurant, when meeting up in a park will be allowed before then.

"They simply cannot see the logic behind this," she says, adding that hospitality businesses are a regulated environment where owners have taken steps to make themselves "Covid secure".

In reply, Boris Johnson says simply that "the logic lies in containing a pandemic, and I think people in this country understand that".

ice

Copyright © 2025 BBC. The BBC is not responsible for the content of external sites. [Read about our approach to external linking.](#)