



AS IT IS

Vietnam Speeds Up COVID-19 Vaccination Program

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Vietnam is speeding up its COVID-19 vaccination program. The country's government hopes the effort will permit officials to loosen coronavirus restrictions in major cities by the end of the month.

More than a million vaccine shots were given over the weekend in Hanoi. The capital city has been under a lockdown since July. About 5.5 million injections have been given in the country since vaccinations started in March, the Health Ministry said.

Hanoi's mayor, Chu Ngoc Anh, said Sunday, "We have to speed up the vaccination program so we can make a plan to reopen the city."

More than half of Vietnam's 98 million people are under lockdown.

About 80 percent of the 5.7 million adults in Hanoi have received at least one shot. Officials aim to have 100 percent of the adult population at least partly vaccinated by the end of this week.

However, the country's overall vaccination rate remains low at about 28 percent. Only 4 percent of the population has been fully vaccinated with both shots.

Vietnam was able to keep its infection rate generally low until April of this year. At that time, it had only 35 reported deaths from the virus. And last year, it was praised for keeping the virus under control.

But the delta **variant** of the virus has infected over 600,000 people and killed more than 15,000 in just four months. Vaccine shortages forced Vietnam to slow down its vaccination program

Ho Chi Minh City, the nation's business center, is the most hard-hit area. Over 95 percent of adults there have received their first COVID-19 vaccine. But many people who need to come in for the second shot are not able to get it because of low supplies.

To help deal with the shortage, the country's health officials have permitted combinations of different two-dose COVID-19 vaccines. Experts say this method is likely safe and effective, but researchers are still gathering data to be sure.

Vietnam is currently using AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Moderna and Sinopharm, a Chinese-made vaccine.

I'm Ashley Thompson.

The Associated Press reported this story. Ashley Thompson adapted it for VOA Learning English. Katy Weaver was the editor.

Words in This Story

variant - n. something that is different in some way from others of the same kind
