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UK secures 60 million Pfizer doses for autumn booster vaccines

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Hancock announces 60m doses of Pfizer jab for autumn booster programme

Britain has secured 60 million more doses of the Pfizer vaccine, which will be used for booster jabs to protect against new variants in the autumn. Ministers said the programme aims to combat the threat posed by variants and "protect the progress that we've all made" as freedoms return. Officials said the doses would be used alongside other vaccinations for the booster programme, which will start by protecting the most vulnerable. Trials are examining "mix and match" combinations of different vaccines to establish the best approach. Enough doses have been secured to cover the whole country, but decisions about how the programme is rolled out have yet to be taken by the joint committee on vaccination and immunisation (JCVI). Officials said the Government is preparing for a booster programme "based on clinical need" which would protect the most vulnerable ahead of winter. It comes as new data from Public Health England shows that one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine reduces household transmission of the virus by up to half. Matt Hancock, the Health Secretary, said: "Our vaccination programme is bringing back our freedom, but the biggest risk to that progress is the risk posed by a new variant. We're working on our plans for booster shots, which are the best way to keep us safe and free while we get this disease under control across the whole world. "These further 60 million doses will be used, alongside others, as part of our booster programme from later this year, so we can protect the progress that we've all made." The final policy will be informed by advice from the JCVI and the results of clinical trials studying the use of different combinations of approved Covid vaccines. Almost two thirds of adults have now had their first vaccine, while a quarter have had both doses. Nadhim Zahawi, the vaccines minister, said: "We are doing everything we can to make sure the most vulnerable are protected from Covid-19 now and in the future. Our brilliant Vaccines Taskforce has secured an extra 60 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines to support our booster programme, which will be developed in line with the advice of our experts. "In the meantime, we are making great progress with our vaccination rollout and I urge everybody to get their vaccines as soon as they are eligible." Overall, the UK has secured access to 517 million doses of eight vaccines.