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Putin Orders Mass Coronavirus Vaccination in Russia 'Next Week'

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Putin said around 2 million Sputnik V vaccine doses have either already been produced or will be manufactured in the coming days. **Sergei Kiselyov / Moskva News Agency**

President Vladimir Putin has ordered the mass vaccination against coronavirus among the Russian population to start late next week, with doctors and teachers first in line to receive the country's Sputnik V jab.

The order came hours after Britain became the first western country to issue general-use approval for Pfizer-BioNTech's jab starting next week.

"Let's organize the process so that large-scale vaccination starts late next week," Putin told Deputy Prime Minister Tatiana Golikova, who is overseeing Russia's Covid-19 response efforts, in a videoconference Wednesday.

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> Путин попросил начать массовую вакцинацию от коронавируса в России в конце следующей недели. Голикова осторожно предложила сначала доложить о готовности, но нет. "Давайте вы не доложите, а начнете". pic.twitter.com/ZUnyVEWCOO
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> — Кремлевский пул РИА (@Kremlinpool_RIA) December 2, 2020

Putin said around 2 million Sputnik V vaccine doses have either already been produced or will be manufactured in the coming days, allowing Russian doctors and teachers to receive the two-dose jabs immediately.

“Let’s make a deal: Don’t report to me but start large-scale vaccination next week,” he told Golikova, who cautiously promised “there’s a chance for large-scale vaccination in December.”

“I understand we need to be cautious, but I know that the industry and the network are generally ready,” Putin said during the meeting on Covid-19 field hospitals deployed by the Russian military to hard-hit regions.

“Let’s make that first step,” Putin said.

Russia was the first country to register a coronavirus vaccine in August despite Sputnik V's incomplete clinical trials. Its developers have since touted a 95% efficacy rate based on interim results of Phase 3 trials.

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