

Russia's Coronavirus Vaccine Can Be 'Updated' With New Strains, Developer Says

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The developers of Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine [said](#) Friday that they have come up with technology that "updates" the jab to protect against new, more-contagious strains of the virus.

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Scientists at the state-run Gamaleya research institute that designed Sputnik V are able to synthesize within 24 hours a virus structure that mimics the new strains, its director

Alexander Gintsburg told state media.

“It’s inserted into the used vector the next day and you end up with a genetically engineered design that allows you to use it as a vaccine,” the RIA Novosti news agency quoted Gintsburg as saying.

He noted that discussions are underway to test the new technology on a limited sample group of up to 100 volunteers without mass clinical trials.

“If it provides the same adequate protective effect against the new strain, it can be mass produced immediately,” Gintsburg said.

Russian health officials said Thursday they have documented 78 cases of the British and five cases of the South African strains since first cases were discovered in Russia earlier this year.

Authorities also [said](#) last fall that a mutated strain of the coronavirus that causes Covid-19 was discovered in Siberia but did not indicate that it was more contagious or dangerous.

Gintsburg’s promotion of advances with Sputnik V comes amid Russia’s comparatively slow vaccine rollout despite peer-reviewed studies showing the jab’s 91.6% effectiveness and the approval of two other domestic vaccines. Public polls show widespread mistrust of Covid-19 vaccines over potential side effects, contraindications and a general lack of information about trial results.

Russia has the world’s fifth-highest caseload of coronavirus infections and, according to state statistics, one of the world’s highest death tolls.

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