

Russia Reports Record Covid Deaths for Fifth Straight Day

By [AFP](#)

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Russia on Saturday reported 697 Covid-19 deaths in the previous 24 hours, the fifth straight day the country has set a new record as it battles the surging Delta variant.

It also recorded 24,439 new coronavirus infections, the highest figure since the middle of January when Russia was emerging from its second wave of the pandemic.

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Russia's coronavirus outbreak has been surging since mid-June against a background of reluctance among many to get vaccinated and suspicion of home-grown shots.

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So far just 16% of Russia's 146 million people have been jabbed.

Moscow on Thursday began offering third doses to those who received their second more than six months ago to boost their defense against new variants.

President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday urged Russians to "listen to experts" rather than rumours about the virus and vaccines, although he also said he was opposed to making inoculations compulsory nationwide.

The government has also ruled out a nationwide lockdown – even as it has acknowledged that it will miss a target of vaccinating 60% of people by August.

So far 137,262 people have died among 5.5 million infected in Russia, according to official figures.

A wider definition of Covid deaths from statistics agency Rosstat tallied 270,000 by late April.

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