

Jamaica becomes first country in the Caribbean to receive COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Facility.

Fifteen Caribbean countries will receive just over 2.1 million doses of COVAX vaccines by May, according to allocation figures provided for the first round

Kingston, Jamaica, March 15, 2021 (PAHO/WHO)- Jamaica today received 14,400 doses of COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Facility, a global effort between the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance Gavi, UNICEF, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

The arrival marks a historic step toward ensuring the equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines worldwide, in the largest vaccine procurement and supply operation in history. This delivery is part of the first phase of deliveries for Jamaica, and more vaccines are expected to arrive successively during 2021. According to the [first round of COVAX allocations](#), Jamaica is expected to continue receiving doses through May until it reaches 124,800, the amount specified by COVAX.

PAHO's Revolving Fund, which is responsible for the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines for the countries of the Americas under the COVAX Facility, sent 14,400 doses of the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine, manufactured by SK Bioscience of South Korea. The vaccines arrived today at Kingston's international airport.

"Seeing this arrival is very reassuring and it means that more people will be able to be protected from COVID-19," said Dr. Bernadette Theodore-Gandi, PAHO/WHO Representative in Jamaica. "We will continue to work with the country to support vaccination along with the entire package of known public health and social measures that we know can help stop the spread of COVID-19, protect health services, and save lives," she added.

The arrival of these first vaccines will serve to protect priority groups and those most at risk, such as health workers and older adults.

"We are pleased that Jamaica is the first country in the Caribbean to receive vaccines under the COVAX Facility. Vaccination has proven an undeniable success in the public health toolkit to reduce the burden of infectious disease and vaccines under the COVAX facility represents a key part of our response to this global pandemic. The amount received will be used to inoculate our healthcare workers and other frontline workers, who have been at the core of our COVID-19 response," noted Dr Christopher Tufton, Minister of Health and Wellness of Jamaica.

Since the first case of COVID-19 was reported in Jamaica, the country has recorded 31,305 confirmed cases and 492 deaths as a result of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, according to [official data from the country](#).

“Every dose arriving in Jamaica brings the promise of protection for more families from COVID-19 infection. Over time, this will bring the pandemic to an end and reduce its harmful secondary impacts on children. They can return to school, access critical services and reduce their vulnerability to violence,” said Mariko Kagoshima, UNICEF representative in the country.

The 15 Caribbean countries that will receive just over 2.1 million doses of COVAX vaccines by May include Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Surinam, and Trinidad and Tobago. Six of these countries (Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent & the Grenadines) will receive the vaccines free of charge.

COVAX seeks to provide vaccines for at least 20% of the population of each participating country during 2021. In this first round of vaccine allocation, all COVAX participating countries will receive doses to vaccinate between 2.2 and 2.6% of their population. The only exceptions are small island developing States, which will receive an allocation of vaccines to cover between 16 and 20% of their population, due to the high logistical cost of delivering small quantities of vaccines.

Until vaccination is widespread among the population, basic public health measures remain the basis of the pandemic response. For public health authorities, this means continuing to conduct screening, contact tracing, isolation, assisted quarantine, and quality care. And for people, it means continuing to practice physical distancing, hand hygiene, the use of masks, adequate ventilation of indoor environments, and avoidance of crowded spaces.

COVAX, the vaccines pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, is co-led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (Gavi) and the World Health Organization (WHO) – working in partnership with UNICEF as key implementing partner, as well as civil society organizations, vaccine manufacturers, the World Bank, and others. In the Americas, the PAHO Revolving Fund is the recognized procurement agent for the COVAX facility.

Links

PAHO Revolving Fund: [PAHO Revolving Fund - PAHO/WHO | Pan American Health Organization](#)

COVAX publishes the first round of assignments: <https://www.gavi.org/news/media-room/covax-publishes-first-round-allocations>

PAHO COVID-19 website: www.paho.org/coronavirus

COVAX: [COVAX \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/covax)

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The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) works with the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of its population. Founded in 1902, it is the world's oldest international public health agency. It serves as the Regional Office of WHO for the Americas and is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American system.