

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Israel Alarmed after 240 Fully Vaccinated People Fall Severely Ill With Covid-19, Topping 160 Unvaccinated Patients in Same Group

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Government and health officials in Israel are expressing alarm and mulling a fourth lockdown after 240 out of 400 individuals who fell severely ill with Covid-19 were fully vaccinated. The country, whose population of 9 million is 80 percent vaccinated among adults (60 percent general population), was being watched closely by governments around the world whose leaders were hoping to use the country's strategy as a model of successful recovery.

But on Thursday, Israel authorities had reinstated mask mandates and many venues are again requiring a negative Covid-19 test, proof of recovery or proof of vaccination before providing access. And the country is now offering people over 60 a booster vaccine shot from Pfizer while planning to offer the booster to younger vaccine recipients in hopes of quelling the rising surge.

Of the 400 people who recently fell severely ill with Covid — including the 240 fully vaccinated individuals — 90 percent were above the age of 90, according to Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, who spoke on the matter Tuesday.

Experts in Israel said it wasn't yet clear what was causing the apparent drop in vaccine protection. Possible culprits mentioned included the Delta variant, waning vaccine immunity or a combination of both, giving rise to uncertainty regarding how to respond.

To that end, Israel in July was among the first countries to begin offering a third Pfizer dose to people 60 years old and over, although there has been no clinical proof that a third dose would be effective, according to [the Wall Street Journal](#). WSJ said the decision came "after preliminary data made available to medical experts advising Israel's government showed that protection against severe illness for vaccinated people in the age group had dropped to 81% from 97% in mid-April."

Hospitals in the country were preparing for a surge similar to the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, as the country has been experiencing a weekly average of 4,000 daily cases.

Mr. Bennet, the prime minister, on Thursday told health authorities to move swiftly in preparing booster shots for people under 60 years of age. "Our goal has been, and remains, fighting the Delta strain without destructive harm to the economy, to the extent possible. In order to meet this task, the vaccination effort is the supreme tool," he said.