

Vaccination of under-12s starts in handful of EU countries

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Greece and a handful of other European Union members began vaccinating children aged 5-11 on Wednesday against COVID-19 as governments brace for the holiday season and the spread of the omicron variant.

Italy, Spain and Hungary were also among those countries expanding the

[vaccination program](#) to [younger children](#) as national agencies formally back the EU regulator's approval last month of the reduced-dose vaccine made by Pfizer-BioNTech.

An Athens children's hospital administered its first jabs early Wednesday, hours after authorities announced the highest daily total of deaths in Greece, at 130, since the start of the pandemic.

More than 30,000 vaccination appointments for under-12s have been booked by Greek parents, among them Education Minister Niki Kerameus.

"I won't hide the fact that on a personal level after having talked with doctors and receiving [scientific data](#), our family decided to vaccinate our son who is five and a half years old," Kerameus said during an online briefing.

A two-month surge in infections across Europe eased slightly in early December, but the appearance of the omicron variant has added to uncertainty even though scientists are not sure how dangerous it is.

The European Center for Disease Prevention and Control said Tuesday that it expects omicron to dominate infections in the EU within the next few months. It suggested that governments consider travel-related restrictions and press ahead with vaccination campaigns and booster shot delivery.

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