

Half of weekly AZ vaccine deliveries to EU delayed: company

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Half of AstraZeneca's vaccine shipments to the European Union will be delayed this week, a company spokesman told AFP Friday, as much of the bloc works to speed up a slow rollout of COVID jabs.

"We communicated to the EC (European Commission) and member states last week that one of the two batches for delivery this week would require testing and will be delivered soon," the spokesman said.

The company nonetheless "remains on target to meet its delivery plans for the [second quarter](#)" of 2021, the spokesman added.

"Weekly deliveries typically show small fluctuations depending on a number of operational factors such as distribution or completion of quality and safety testing."

A Financial Times report said the company expected to deliver 1.3 million doses to the 27 EU members plus Iceland and Norway this week, rather than the 2.6 million expected initially.

The EU has a population of almost 450 million people.

The shortfall would be spread out across all the countries, the newspaper said.

Relations between the Anglo-Swedish pharmaceutical group and the EU regarding its COVID-19 vaccine have been difficult at times and [delivery](#) delays have been a recurring problem.

The EU's drug regulator said earlier Friday it was probing a new condition possibly linked to the vaccine.

Five cases were reported of people suffering a rare condition in which tiny blood vessels leak after getting the AstraZeneca jab, causing swelling and a drop in [blood pressure](#).

"It is not yet clear whether there is a causal association" between the two vaccines and the cases, the Amsterdam-based EMA said in a statement that also referred to a vaccine produced by US group Johnson & Johnson.

That came on top of an EMA advisory on Wednesday that [blood clots](#) should be listed as a "very rare" side effect of the AstraZeneca jab.

Several countries have now restricted use of the AstraZeneca vaccination, for example in Britain to those over the age of 30, or in Sweden to those over 65.

French health authorities said Friday that more than half a million people under the age of 55 who had already received one shot of the AstraZeneca [vaccine](#) would be offered a second shot of one produced by Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna.

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