

Bulgaria suspends AstraZeneca vaccine

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Bulgaria on Friday suspended the use of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine as it investigated the death of a woman with several underlying conditions who received the jab this week.

The temporary suspension follows other countries in Europe, including Denmark, Iceland and Norway, which paused AstraZeneca vaccinations

over safety concerns.

"I order a halt in vaccinations with the AstraZeneca vaccine until the European Medicines Agency dismisses all doubts about its safety," said a government press service statement quoting Prime Minister Boyko Borisov.

The prime minister requested "a written statement with an accurate and clearly confirmed diagnosis—can we or can we not administer it", the statement added.

Health Minister Kostadin Angelov said the halt was in response to the death of a woman in the central city of Plovdiv.

Angelov said the 57-year-old woman passed away at 3:00 am Friday after receiving the jab around noon on Thursday.

The woman, who had multiple underlying conditions—including coronary disease and a bypass surgery—was reportedly feeling well after the vaccination itself but suffered from "acute suffocation".

Though an initial probe suggested that she died from heart failure and an autopsy found no link with the vaccination, the AstraZeneca inoculation would be suspended at least until the final results of the autopsy next week, Angelov said.

The EMA said Thursday that countries can keep using AstraZeneca's vaccine while it probes cases of blood clots that prompted suspension of particular batches of the vaccine or all of the company's jabs in several countries.

Bulgaria falls last among EU countries in terms of its vaccination rate with only 270,000 people, or 3.9 percent, of the population receiving at

least one dose so far.

The country has ordered far more AstraZeneca vaccines than Pfizer/BioNtech and Moderna doses.

It was mainly using the AstraZeneca vaccine in recent weeks after deciding to scrap prioritisation lists and offer jabs to anyone willing to take them.

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