

Boris Johnson is 'hopeful' coronavirus restrictions can be cautiously eased in coming weeks

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The PM will set out his road map out of lockdown next week

Boris Johnson says he is “hopeful” coronavirus restrictions can be cautiously eased in the coming weeks, with vaccines providing “grounds for confidence”.

The prime minister, who will set out his ‘road map’ out of lockdown on Monday, told a Downing Street briefing he hoped the current national lockdown would be the last.

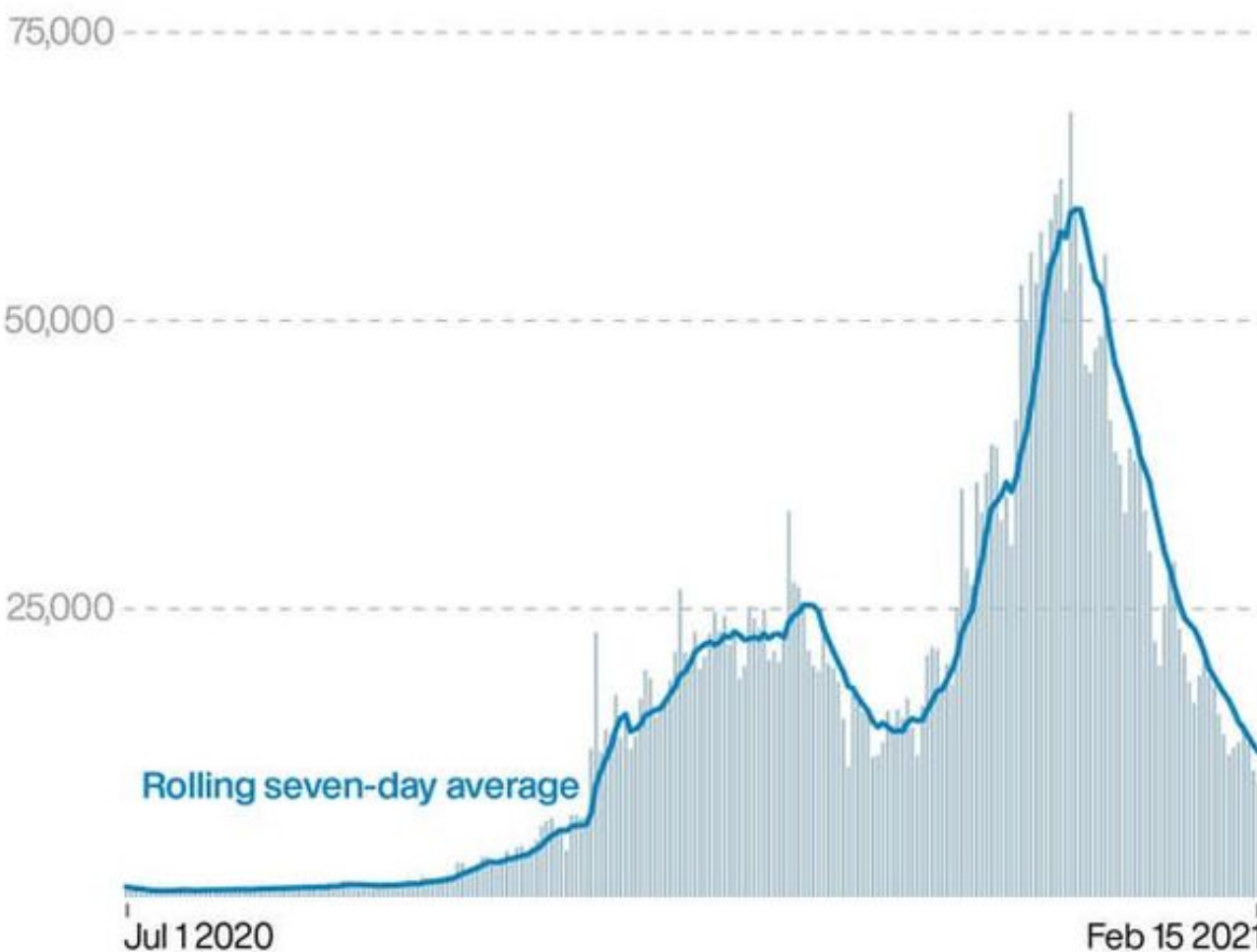
The Times newspaper has reported that preliminary data comparing elderly

people who have received the vaccine with those who have not is starting to show it is cutting hospital admissions and deaths.

Ministers have already been given data showing vaccines are cutting illness by about two-thirds, while a separate study suggests jabs are reducing transmission, the paper reported.

Daily confirmed cases of Covid-19 in the UK

(by date cases were reported)



PA graphic. Source: Department of Health & Social Care
Figures are for confirmed cases identified through PHE, NHS and commercial testing

The prime minister will be analyzing data on coronavirus case numbers, hospital admissions, deaths, and the impact of the vaccine rollout this week ahead of his announcement.

A Public Health England spokesman said: "It is too early to draw firm conclusions

from our surveillance programme.

“We have been analyzing the data since the start of the vaccination programme rollout and will publish our findings in due course.”

Mr. Johnson said there were “grounds for confidence” that vaccines were helping to curb the spread of coronavirus, not just in protecting those who received the jab.

He told yesterday’s press conference: “We have some interesting straws in the wind, we have some grounds for confidence but the vaccinations have only been running for a matter of weeks.”

NHS England chief executive Sir Simon Stevens said the end of April target to vaccinate the estimated 17 million people in the next five priority groups has been set due to “likely vaccine supply”, but added “if supply increases then we think we can go faster”.



The PM was joined by Prof Chris Whitty and Chief Executive of the NHS in England, Sir Simon Stevens

He confirmed vaccines are being reserved for second booster doses, as he described the rollout of the vaccine programme as “two sprints” followed by a marathon.

In England, no decisions have been made on whether all pupils can return to school at the same time on March 8, he said.

It comes after reports suggested a staggered approach may be taken, with secondary schools going back a week later than primaries.

Meanwhile, the Scottish government is expected to make an announcement on the return to school of some pupils, including those aged between four and seven.

A new study by epidemiologists at the University of Warwick has suggested schools do not play a significant role in driving the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

Elsewhere, a study in Scotland has concluded “potentially significant risks of COVID-19 transmission” were found in pubs and bars across the country last summer despite the efforts of owners and government guidance.

The University of Stirling research, published in the Journal Of Studies On Alcohol And Drugs, is said to be the first in the world to examine the measures tackling coronavirus in licensed premises.

Business owners and representatives were interviewed before reopening to understand the challenges they faced, with researchers then visiting 29 premises for up to two hours while posing as customers.

A range of incidents with the potential to increase transmission risk were observed in all but three venues in the research carried out between May and August as bars began to reopen to the public.

Mass vaccine coverage and the use of rapid lateral flow testing is the favored approach to reopen “the toughest nuts to crack” such as nightclubs and theatres, according to the prime minister.

His suggestion was backed by the World Health Organisation’s special envoy on

COVID-19, Dr. David Nabarro, who told ITV's Good Morning Britain: "The secret to getting life back to some degree of normality for most of us is going to be the availability of really reliable, super-quick tests.

"That will make movement so, so much easier."

Source:

<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/uk-news/boris-johnson-hopeful-coronavirus-restrictions-19846850>

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