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Covid-19: Minister urges vaccine confidence, as South Africa stops AstraZeneca jab rollout

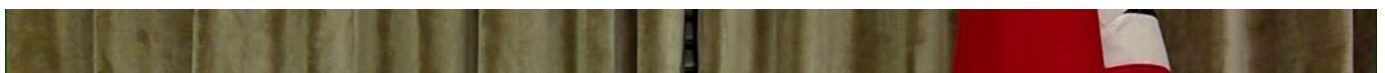
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Coronavirus pandemic

Here are five things you need to know about the coronavirus pandemic this Monday morning. We'll have another update for you this evening.

1. Vaccines minister urges confidence, despite SA variant study

The public should have "confidence" in the UK vaccination programme, **the vaccines minister says** - despite a study showing the AstraZeneca jab may be **less effective** against the South African variant of Covid-19. The study involved about 2,000 people, with an average age of 31. It showed the jab offered "minimal protection" against mild and moderate disease from the South African variant. AstraZeneca said it did not know whether the jab would stop severe illness, because the study was predominantly on younger people. But the company said it could still be effective. Vaccines minister Nadhim Zahawi says the jabs "appear to work well" against the variants currently dominant in the UK. On Sunday, he told the BBC that a booster in the autumn, and annual vaccines, could be needed to combat variants. He also ruled out "vaccine passports" for people to travel - watch the clip below.





Vaccines minister Nadhim Zahawi: "We have no plan of introducing a vaccine passport"

2. South Africa stops AZ vaccine rollout

South Africa has responded to the study by **pausing the rollout of the AstraZeneca vaccine**. The country has received 1m doses of the AstraZeneca jab and was due to start vaccinating people next week. The government will still offer vaccines produced by Johnson & Johnson and Pfizer in the coming weeks. Watch our explainer on how vaccines are approved below.



How does a vaccine get approved?

3. Clean up Covid contracts, says Labour

Labour is challenging the government to "clean up" how it awards contracts for Covid work. In a speech on Monday, shadow Cabinet Office minister Rachel Reeves will say procurement during the pandemic has been **"rife with conflicts of interest"**. She will call for a new ethics watchdog to "guarantee standards" for spending public money. The government said it has "robust rules" to ensure that conflicts of interest do not occur.

PA MEDIA

Rachel Reeves will also call for the Freedom of Information Act to cover all new public service contracts outsourced to private firms

4. A Super Bowl show fit for a pandemic

The Super Bowl Halftime Show is traditionally built on grand gestures and eye-popping spectacle. Think about Lady Gaga diving off the roof of Houston's NRG stadium, or Katy Perry riding an animatronic lion, or Diana Ross soaring out of Arizona's Sun Devil Stadium. waving to fans through the open door of a

helicopter. This year was a little different. Canadian R&B star The Weeknd was the interval act and was largely forced to perform from the stands, rather than the pitch, in compliance with strict coronavirus protocols. Read our reporter **Mark Savage's full review here.**

REUTERS

The Weeknd performed a medley of eight hits including Starboy and Blinding Lights

5. Lockdown lyricists go viral again

A British family who went viral during the first lockdown - after adapting a song from the musical Les Miserables - have done it again. This time the Marsh family, from Kent, turned to a Bonnie Tyler track for inspiration...





This time the Marsh family were inspired by Bonnie Tyler's song, Total Eclipse of the Heart

Get a longer daily news briefing from the BBC in your inbox, each weekday morning, by signing up here.

And don't forget...

You can find more information, advice and guides on our **coronavirus page**. This piece looks at UK virus data - **including the falling daily case and death rate.**

What questions do you have about coronavirus?

In some cases, your question will be published, displaying your name, age and location as you provide it, unless you state otherwise. Your contact details will never be published. Please ensure you have read our [terms & conditions](#) and [privacy policy](#).

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