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Explainers

Covid: Will I need a vaccine passport to go on holiday?

By Eleanor Lawrie
BBC News

🕒 23 hours ago



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The health secretary is the latest cabinet member to admit that a vaccine passport or certificate may be needed in future for international travel.

However, Matt Hancock told the BBC that the government had no plans to introduce one for use within the UK.

What could a vaccine passport be used for?

More than 15 million people have been vaccinated in the UK so far. They have received a record card, while the immunisation has gone on their medical record.

It's been argued that a vaccine passport or certificate could allow people to prove their status when they travel abroad.

There has also been debate on whether it could be used as an ID to enable people to resume normal life at home, for instance entering a shop or restaurant, or getting a job.

What did the health secretary say?

Mr Hancock told the Today programme that some countries were planning to require proof of vaccination to allow entry when international travel resumed, and the UK would have to engage with those plans.

He said, "There is a live international debate and work on how you can have credible proof that somebody has had a vaccine. And obviously we are part of that."



What have other countries done?

- In **Greece**, the prime minister has urged the European Commission to introduce a coronavirus vaccination certificate which would allow "the freedom of movement of persons who have been vaccinated"
- **Estonia** and the UN's health agency is creating e-vaccination certificates known as a "smart yellow card"
- **Denmark** is developing a digital vaccine passport so citizens can prove they have had the jab
- **Spain** is compiling a database of vaccine refusers, which it will share with the European Union. This will ensure no-one has been accidentally missed off the vaccination list, the health minister said

What does the tourism industry say?

Saga, which specialises in holidays for the over-50s, says passengers on its 2021 holidays or cruises must be fully vaccinated.

Australian airline Qantas says travellers will eventually need to prove coronavirus vaccination to board its flights.

However, the World Travel & Tourism Council has said that a strategy for re-starting international travel should be based on testing rather than a vaccine-centred scheme.

Travellers already have to present proof of vaccinations when entering certain countries

Are vaccine passports the right thing to do?

Some academics and human rights groups fear vaccine passports could discriminate against those who are waiting for the vaccine, can't have it, or do not want it.

However, a team from the Oxford Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics suggest it's "unethical" to keep people isolated who have no or little risk of spreading coronavirus.

"If we have the technology to decide who is not a risk, we should use it," they say in the medical journal, medical journal The Lancet.

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Millions of people have already been vaccinated in the UK and around the world

Could a vaccine passport be used within the UK?

Another use for a vaccine passport might be to relax restrictions for low-risk individuals.

Government ministers have said that there are no plans to introduce such a document for use in the UK.

The question remains though, whether businesses could refuse to serve

unvaccinated customers, or employ unvaccinated workers.

Plumbing firm Pimlico Plumbers says it will **require employees to be vaccinated**, and may not keep on those who don't comply.

However, demanding staff are vaccinated would be unlawful in the "majority of circumstances", says Ella Bond, an employment lawyer at Harper James solicitors.

She says it could lead to unfair dismissal and discrimination claims. Exceptions could be if it was "job critical" for people to be vaccinated - for example care home workers, or roles requiring overseas travel.

- **When will I get a Covid vaccine?**

If I can show proof of vaccination, do I have to follow lockdown restrictions?

The short answer is yes.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock says it is "important that everybody post-vaccination continues to follow [lockdown] rules", to bring the number of cases down and to protect themselves.

However, it is hoped widespread vaccination could ultimately allow some or all of the population to move closer to normality.

A study by the University of Oxford suggests the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine may have a "substantial" effect on transmission of the virus.

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