



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



MEDIA STATEMENT

To: Editors & Health Journalists

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Government announces changes on vaccination programme

Pretoria: The Department of Health would like to announce changes with regards to vaccination programme as part of ongoing efforts guided by scientific evidence to increase uptake to COVID-19 vaccine in South Africa.

Some of these changes include reduction of time interval between first and second doses of Pfizer from 42 days to 21 days with effect from Wednesday, 23 February 2022. Firstly, all individuals who are fully vaccinated with Pfizer vaccine, meaning they have received both doses, will now be eligible for booster dose 90 days (or three months) after the second dose instead of the current 180 days (or six months) interval.

Secondly, all individuals older than 18 years of age who have received one dose of the COVID-19 J&J vaccine will, with effect from today (Monday, 21 February 2022) be eligible to receive a booster dose of the same vaccine or a booster dose of Pfizer vaccine after an interval of two months (60 days).

Thirdly, individuals over the age of 18 years who have received two doses of the Pfizer vaccine will, effective from Wednesday, 23 February 2022, be eligible to receive a booster dose of the same vaccine or a booster dose of the COVID-19 J&J vaccine at least 90 days (three months) after the second dose. This is called heterologous booster doses, meaning booster doses of a different vaccine to that which was administered as the primary dose.

The decision regarding which vaccine to administer as a booster should be guided by vaccine availability. Thus, if both vaccines are available at vaccination site, homologous boosting should be preferred, unless the vaccinee requests to receive a heterologous or different booster dose, or has a history of experiencing an adverse event following immunisation.

However, people are reminded that all adverse events following immunisation must be reported to their nearest vaccination site or COVID-19 Public Hotline 0800 029 999.

Meanwhile, the department is updating the Electronic Vaccine Data System (EVDS) to enable individuals who received their primary COVID vaccinations outside South Africa, but are eligible to receive a booster dose, to be registered on the system to receive the booster dose.

More information regarding the date at which the functionality to record such doses on the EVDS will be communicated once this is finalised and available on the EVDS.

COVID-19 vaccinations become available as part of routine health services. This means COVID-19 vaccines may be co-administered with other vaccines. Co-administration of vaccines is essential to increase the immunisation coverage of all vaccines including but not limited to, influenza and human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines.

Whilst the COVID-19 vaccination programme initially recommended a 14-day interval between an individual receiving a COVID-19 vaccine and any other vaccination, this is no longer required.

COVID-19 vaccines remain the most effective weapon against the pandemic and provide protection against COVID-19 infection.

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