



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COVID-19 AND VACCINES

A COMPLETE GUIDE



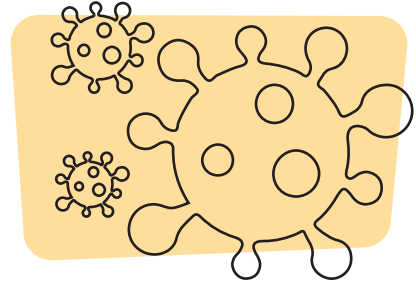
health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Learning the Basics

What is Coronavirus?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for virus, and 'D' for disease. The COVID-19 virus is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold.



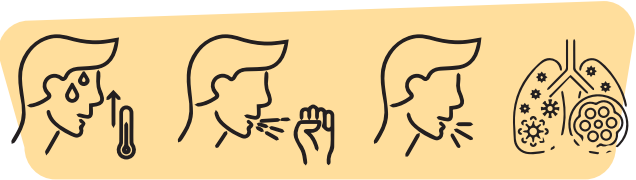
What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms can include mainly:

Fever, cough and shortness of breath

In more severe cases, infection can cause:

Pneumonia or breathing difficulties



How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person (generated through coughing and sneezing). Individuals can also be infected from and touching surfaces contaminated with the virus and touching their face (e.g., eyes, nose, mouth).



Why should I wear a mask?

When a person infected with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, or talks, they produce respiratory droplets that can travel about two metres and can land in the mouths or noses of those nearby, infecting others with the virus.

COVID-19 can also be spread by people who don't know they have the virus since they aren't experiencing any symptoms.

Because of this, wearing masks can help slow the spread of the virus.



EIGHT steps to using your face mask correctly

It is very important that cloth masks are used correctly. Incorrect use might result in users putting themselves at risk of spreading Covid-19.

- Only use a mask that has been washed and ironed.
- Wash your hands before putting the mask on and ensure that it covers both your nose and mouth properly.
- Make sure it fits well. Move it around to get the best fit. Never touch the cloth part.
- Once you have put on the mask, **DO NOT TOUCH YOUR FACE** again until you take it off.
- When you take it off, undo the ties, and carefully fold the mask inside out, hold it by the strings/elastic and place the mask in a container reserved for washing the cloth mask.
- Wash your hands thoroughly and dry before doing anything else.
- Wash cloth masks with warm soapy water and iron when dry.
- You must have at least two cloth masks per person so you will be able to wash one and have a clean one ready for use.



Why must I wash with hands with soap or an alcohol-based sanitizer?

COVID-19 spreads when mucus or droplets containing the virus get into your body through your eyes, nose or throat. Often, the virus can easily spread from one person to the next via hands.



How do I keep my hands clean?

To eliminate all traces of the virus on your hands, a quick scrub and a rinse won't cut it.

Below is a step-by-step process for effective handwashing:

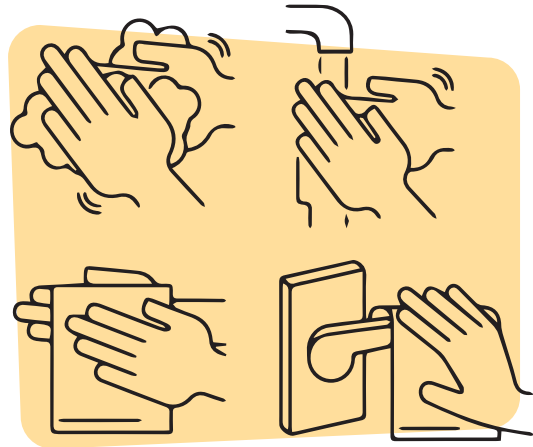
Step 1: Wet hands with running water

Step 2: Apply enough soap to cover wet hands

Step 3: Scrub all surfaces of the hands – including back of hands, between fingers and under nails – for at least 20 seconds.

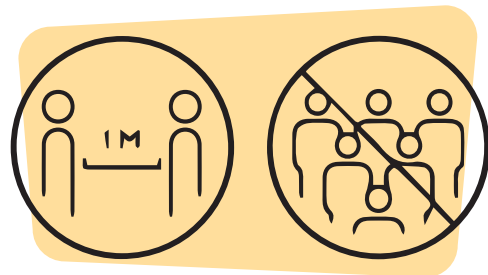
Step 4: Rinse thoroughly with running water

Step 5: Dry hands with a clean cloth or single-use towel



What must I keep a distance between other people?

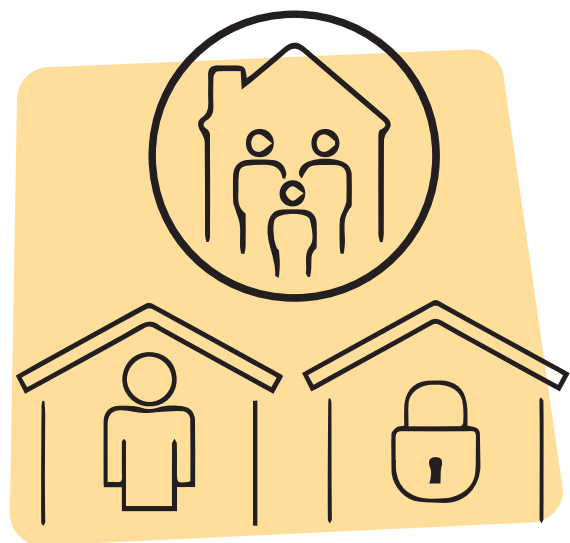
COVID-19 can spread through coughing, sneezing and close contact. By minimizing the amount of close contact we have with others, we reduce our chances of catching the virus and spreading it to our loved ones and within our community. This is why we should remain at least 1.5 metres away from other people.



Do you know the difference between quarantine and isolation?

Quarantine applies to anyone who was in close contact with a person infected with coronavirus and is not yet showing symptoms of infection.

Isolation is reserved for those who are already sick and/or have tested positive for COVID-19 infections, but do not require hospital admission for medical care.



Improving your Vaccine Knowledge

What is a COVID-19 vaccine?

A vaccine is intended to provide immunity against COVID-19.

In general, vaccines contain weakened or inactive parts of a particular organism that triggers an immune response within the body. This weakened version will not cause the disease in the person receiving the vaccine, but it will prompt their immune system to respond.

Some vaccines require multiple doses, given weeks or months apart. This is sometimes needed to allow for the production of long-lived antibodies and development of memory cells.

In this way, the body is trained to fight the specific disease-causing organism, building up memory against the pathogen so it can fight it in the future.



What is herd immunity?

When a lot of people in a community are vaccinated, the pathogen has a hard time circulating because most of the people it encounters are immune. So the more that others are vaccinated, the less likely people who are unable to be protected by vaccines are at risk of even being exposed to the harmful pathogens. This is called herd immunity.

But no single vaccine provides 100% protection, and herd immunity does not provide full protection to those who cannot safely be vaccinated. But with herd immunity, these people will have substantial protection, thanks to those around them being vaccinated. Vaccinating not only protects yourself, but also protects those in the community who are unable to be vaccinated.



What process is followed before a vaccine is given to the public?

Before COVID-19 vaccines can be delivered:

- 1) The vaccines must be proven safe and effective in large clinical trials.
- 2) A series of independent reviews of the efficacy and safety evidence is required.
- 3) The evidence must also be reviewed for the purpose of policy recommendations on how the vaccines should be used.
- 4) An external panel of experts convened by WHO, called the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE), analyzes the results from clinical trials.
- 5) The panel then recommends whether and how the vaccines should be used.
- 6) Officials in individual countries decide whether to approve the vaccines for national use and develop policies for how to use the vaccines in their country based on the WHO recommendations.

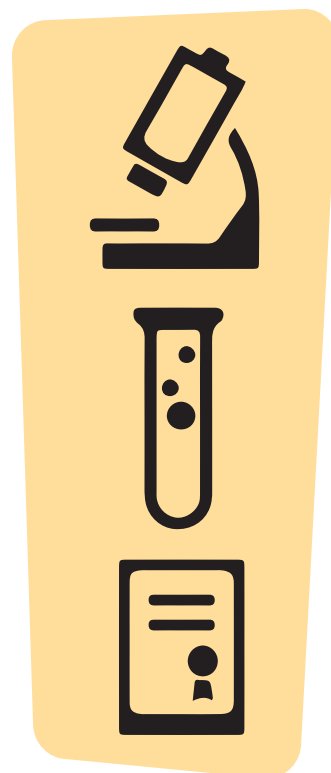


What steps are taken to ensure the COVID-19 vaccine is safe?

COVID-19 vaccines go through a rigorous, multi-stage testing process, including large trials that involve tens of thousands of people. These trials, which include people at high risk for COVID-19, are specifically designed to identify any common side effects or other safety concerns.

Once a clinical trial shows that a COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective, a series of independent reviews of the efficacy and safety evidence is required, including regulatory review and approval in the country where the vaccine is manufactured, before WHO considers a vaccine product for prequalification.

An external panel of experts convened by WHO analyzes the results from clinical trials, along with evidence on the disease, age groups affected, risk factors for disease, and other information. The panel recommends whether and how the vaccines should be used.



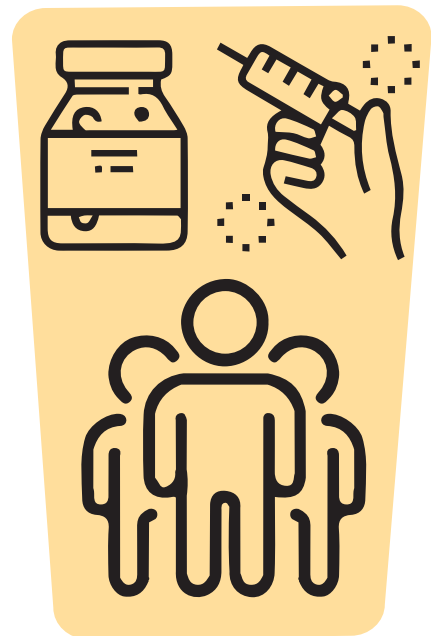
Improving your Vaccine Knowledge

Are vaccines necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

There is overwhelming scientific evidence that vaccination is the best defence against serious infections. Vaccines do not give you the virus, rather it teaches your immune system to recognise and fight the infection.

The COVID-19 vaccine presents the body with instructions to build immunity and does not alter human cells. Vaccines have reduced the morbidity and mortality of infectious diseases such as smallpox, poliomyelitis, hepatitis B, measles, tetanus, whooping cough and pneumococcal conjugate across the world.

Vaccinating enough people would help create herd immunity and stamp out the disease.



Are vaccines safe to use?

Vaccines undergo rigorous trials to ensure they are safe and effective. All vaccines go through a comprehensive approval process by medical regulators to ensure that they are safe. Pharmaceutical companies hand over all laboratory studies and safety trials to validate that the vaccine does work.

Any safety concerns are picked up by regulators when reviewing the data. Vaccines are made to save lives - not to oppress, bewitch, possess or indoctrinate people.



Where is South Africa getting its first vaccine from?

South Africa will receive 1 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine in January and 500,000 doses in February of the Oxford University-AstraZeneca vaccine from the Serum Institute of India (SII)



Who will get the COVID-19 vaccine first?

We will begin by vaccinating our country's estimated 1.25 million healthcare workers



How do we make sure COVID-19 vaccines are safe?

Government is working closely with South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) to ensure there is no delay approving the vaccine for use.

The Oxford University–AstraZeneca vaccine has already been approved by various regulators around the world and is being rolled out in other countries.



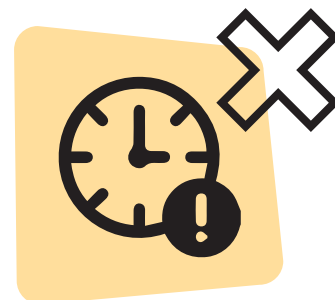
Who are our other vaccine suppliers?

We have also reached an agreement with the COVAX Facility to secure vaccines to immunise 10% of the population. These doses are expected at the beginning of second quarter of the year and we continue to work with various pharmaceuticals companies to ensure we immunise 67% of the population by the end 2021.



Was there a deliberate delay in acquiring a COVID-19 vaccine for South Africans?

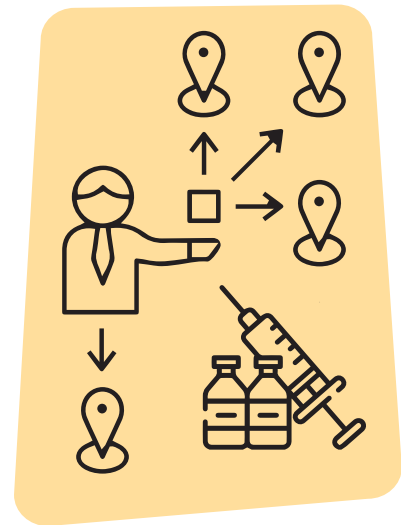
There has been no deliberate delay to access the COVID-19 vaccine, as the situation remains fluid; all factors have to be taken into account. We are selecting vaccines on their safety and efficacy, ease of use, storage, distribution, supply sustainability and cost



How will the vaccine be distributed?

Our rollout of the vaccine will take a three-phase approach that begins with the most vulnerable in our population. Our target is to vaccinate 67% of the population by the end of 2021, which will allow us to achieve herd immunity.

- Phase 1** will focus on frontline healthcare workers
- Phase 2** will vaccinate essential workers, persons in congregate settings, persons over 60 years and persons over 18 years with co-morbidities.
- Phase 3** will focus on persons older than 18 years, targeting 22,500,000 of the population.



Who is purchasing the COVID-19 vaccine for South Africa?

Government will source, distribute and oversee the rollout of the vaccine. Government as the sole purchaser of vaccines will distribute it to provincial governments and the private sector.

A national register for COVID-19 vaccinations will be established. The vaccination system will be based on a pre-vaccination registration and appointment system. All those vaccinated will be placed on a national register and provided with a vaccination card.

A national rollout committee will oversee the vaccine implementation in both the public and private sectors.



Know the Difference between Myths and Facts

Myth: Wearing masks is bad for your health

Fact: Prolonged use of any face mask has not been shown to cause carbon dioxide toxicity or lack of adequate oxygen in healthy people. Healthcare workers routinely wear masks for prolonged periods while performing their duties. Cloth masks provide an additional layer of protection by reducing the number of microorganisms that a person releases into the air. Mass mask wearing will ensure that fewer potential viral droplets are released into the air. Wearing a mask reduces the risk that someone will be exposed to the virus.



Myth: Lockdown measures deprive people of their freedoms and are in keeping with an authoritarian regime

Fact: The current measures are temporary and have been enacted to protect our nation and her people. Our freedoms will never be at risk and are protected by the Constitution, Bill of Rights and our commitment to the rule of law and democracy and freedom.



Myth: The spirits of those who have died from COVID-19 cannot rest with a plastic bag covering them

Fact: The human remains of a person who has died from coronavirus are considered contagious and should be kept only in designated mortuaries. Under no circumstances shall the human remains be directly handled, whether for aesthetic, hygiene preparations, cultural or religious reasons. No one is allowed to exhume a body for any reason unless they have permission from the relevant authorities to do so.



Myth: Vaccines are unsafe and normal safety protocols have been circumvented to fast track their authorisation for use

Fact: The fast development and approval of vaccines is a great human feat worthy of celebration. This has been possible because we have learnt over many decades how to make and test vaccines and we were able to take those lessons and challenge ourselves to produce a vaccine much quicker. No step in the development, testing or ratification of the COVID-19 vaccines has been skipped. The world was able to develop vaccines fast because scientists and governments around the world collaborated in a manner that has never been achieved before and pooled resources and information to ensure that everyone can contribute to the knowledge.



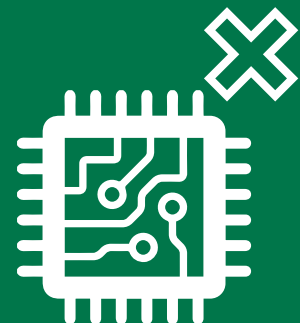
Myth: The vaccine will change my DNA

Fact: Vaccines work by stimulating the body the same way the virus would if someone were infected. That means when you receive the vaccine the body then recognised that it looks like the coronavirus and then it releases certain chemicals that start a chain reaction to make immune cells that can fight the real virus. The vaccine does not work on the DNA of the body. Some people think that because some of the vaccines are made using RNA technology that means the RNA will interact with the DNA. That is not how it works. The technology is simply the way the vaccine is made - not what it will do to the body.



Myth: Vaccines contain a form of microchip that will be used to track and control an individual

Fact: There is no vaccine "microchip" and there is no evidence to support claims that such a move is planned. Receiving a vaccine will not allow people to be tracked and personal information would not be entered into a database.



Myth: Big businesses are pushing vaccines to improve profits

Fact: The COVID-19 crisis has caused massive upheaval across the globe and no nation has been spared. A vaccine represents the best hope to save lives and to restore our way of life, many governments have therefore entered into direct talks with vaccine makers to ensure a timeous supply of vaccines.



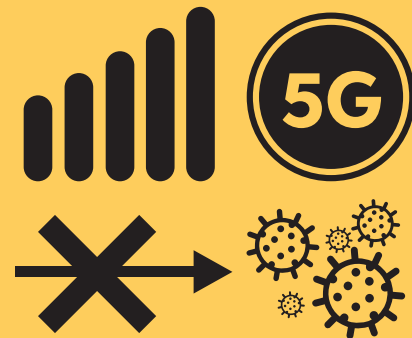
Myth: Government is complicit with big businesses in pushing vaccines despite the risks

Fact: Government is committed to saving lives and livelihoods. The fastest way to return to our way of life is through ensuring that the majority of the population are protected from the virus. Vaccines are the simplest and most effective way to do this.



Myth: 5G networks cause the coronavirus through radiation emissions

Fact: The World Health Organisation has made it clear that viruses cannot travel on radio waves and mobile networks. COVID-19 is spreading in many countries that do not have 5G mobile networks.



Myth: The Vaccines have the mark of the Beast - 666

Fact: Vaccines have no connection with any religious organisations and cannot be infused with spirits, demons or other abstract ingredients. There is no conspiracy to possess, bewitch or control anybody



Myth: Vaccines are a way for our former oppressors to oppress us again

Fact: Government would never allow a situation where any country or nation would be allowed to oppress our people through any means. Scientists and governments all over the world, including our own, have all contributed to the knowledge that has led to the development of the vaccines. It has not just been the work of Western and rich countries but a global collaboration.

