

Key Messages on COVID-19 Vaccination in South Sudan

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*This document is a resource for partners and stakeholders to use when discussing COVID-19 vaccination with target audiences, clarifying rumors and misinformation, and encouraging people to get vaccinated. **It is not intended for distribution to the public.** The messages will be updated periodically. [New content since the last update is in blue.](#)*

COVID-19 Basics

- COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
- It is spread through droplets and aerosols when an infected person talks, breathes, sneezes, coughs, or spits.
- It can also spread if a person touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth after touching a surface contaminated with the virus.
- The signs and symptoms of COVID-19 include
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue or tiredness
 - New loss of taste and/or smell
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea
- Some people infected with COVID-19 do not have any signs or symptoms.
- Everyone is at risk of catching COVID-19. Personal characteristics like economic status, education, race, etc. do not increase or decrease risk of infection.

COVID-19 and the Delta Variant in South Sudan

- COVID-19 affects all people, including South Sudanese people. People in South Sudan are being diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Over time, multiple variants of the COVID-19 virus have emerged around the world. Some have reached South Sudan.
 - A variant is a strain of the virus that has changed slightly from the original.
- The Delta variant is one of the recently identified variants.
- The Delta variant is more contagious than other variants circulating. It spreads more easily between people and can make more people sick quickly.
- The Delta variant can cause severe illness and death.

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- The Delta variant has been found in South Sudan and is spreading quickly. Sequencing, or the analysis of samples taken, shows the Delta variant is causing cases in South Sudan.

COVID-19 Vaccine

- There are many vaccines approved and being used around the world to protect against COVID-19
- Two vaccines are being used in South Sudan.
 - The AstraZeneca vaccine, called Vaxzevria.
 - The AstraZeneca vaccine requires two doses given at least eight weeks apart to build the best protection. It is very important to take both doses.
 - The Johnson and Johnson (J&J) vaccine.
 - The J&J vaccine only requires one dose to build protection.
- The vaccines in South Sudan are provided through the Ministry of Health for free.
- Everyone 18 years old or older should take the COVID-19 vaccine to help protect themselves, their families, and their communities.

Vaccine Safety and Efficacy

- The vaccines being used in South Sudan are safe and effective.
- The vaccines protect against COVID-19, including the Delta variant.
- The vaccines went through safety and efficacy trials prior to being approved for use.
- The vaccines are currently being used in many countries around the world to protect people from COVID-19.
- You cannot get COVID-19 from COVID-19 vaccines.
- It's normal to feel COVID-19-like symptoms after you are vaccinated. That means your body is working to build up protection. Your body is also building protection if you don't have any side effects.
- After taking a COVID-19 vaccine, people may have mild side effects like fever, a sore arm or pain at the injection site, headache, or fatigue. These side effects usually go away within a few days.
- Severe side effects are possible, but rare. A very small number of people have had blood clots after taking these vaccines. People should seek immediate medical care if they experience severe or constant headaches or blurred vision, shortness of breath, chest pain, leg swelling, persistent stomach pain, or easy bruising or tiny blood spots under the skin beyond the injection site after taking the vaccine.

Who Should Take a COVID-19 Vaccine

- All people 18 years of age and older are eligible to take a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Healthcare workers and health professionals are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated because their job puts them at a higher risk of getting infected.
 - Taking a COVID-19 vaccine will also help them prevent spreading the virus to their patients.
- People over 65 years old and people with health conditions like diabetes, HIV, or heart or lung diseases are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated because of their increased risk of becoming severely ill if they get COVID-19.
- Pregnant and breastfeeding women can take a COVID-19 vaccine and should talk to their healthcare provider if they have questions or concerns.

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- People who have had COVID-19 should take a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Children are not eligible to take a COVID-19 vaccine.

Vaccination Locations

- Vaccines are being offered at designated health facilities across the country.

Mixing vaccines

- People **SHOULD NOT** take the J&J COVID-19 vaccine if they have taken one or two doses of AstraZeneca vaccine or another COVID-19 vaccine.
 - If a person has taken one dose of AstraZeneca vaccine, h/she should return at the appropriate time for the second dose of AstraZeneca vaccine.
- People **SHOULD NOT** take the AstraZeneca vaccine if they have taken J&J vaccine.

Infection After Vaccination

- It is possible to get COVID-19 after being fully vaccinated.
 - With the AstraZeneca vaccine, you are considered fully vaccinated 15 days after taking the second dose. Your body needs that time after vaccination to build protection.
 - **With the J&J vaccine, you are considered fully vaccinated 14 days after vaccination. Your body needs that time after vaccination to build protection.**
- Infections after vaccination are called break through infections.
- If you are infected after vaccination, the vaccine helps protect against severe illness and death.
- If you are infected after vaccination, you can pass the virus to other people.
- It is important to still take additional steps, like wearing a mask and distancing, to protect yourself against COVID-19 even after being fully vaccinated.

Protective Behaviors

- Everyone, including people who are fully vaccinated, should take steps to protect themselves against COVID-19.
- To protect themselves and help stop the spread of the virus everyone should
 - Get vaccinated if they are 18 or older
 - Maintain 2 meters distance between themselves and other people
 - Wear a face mask correctly, over the nose and mouth, when in public
 - Regularly wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer
 - Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or bent elbow
 - Avoid crowded places (i.e., funerals, churches, mosques, weddings, nightclubs, or bars) and poorly ventilated rooms or buildings

COVID-19 Vaccine and Fertility

- COVID-19 vaccines are safe and do not affect fertility in women or men.
- There is currently no evidence that antibodies made following COVID-19 vaccination or that vaccine ingredients would cause any problems with becoming pregnant now or in the future.

COVID-19 Vaccine and Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

- The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and do not affect pregnancy.
- Pregnant women are at risk of severe illness from COVID-19, therefore it is recommended that they get vaccinated
- There is no need to delay getting pregnant after taking a COVID-19 vaccine.
- The COVID-19 vaccines are safe for breastfeeding mothers and their babies.

COVID Vaccine and Children

- Children under the age of 18 are not eligible to take the vaccine.
- Because they cannot be vaccinated, it is very important that children to protect themselves from COVID-19. Children should
 - Maintain 2 meters distance between themselves and other people
 - Wear a face mask correctly, over the nose and mouth, when in public
 - Children under 2 should not wear a face mask
 - Regularly wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer
 - Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or bent elbow
 - Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated places
- Parents and adult family members of children under 18 should get vaccinated and take precautions like wearing a mask and social distancing in public to help protect children.

Vaccine Expiration

- All vaccines, including the COVID-19 vaccine, come with an expiration date to show when they are most effective to be given.
- No vaccine will be given after its expiration date.
- All vaccines remaining after the expiration date will be destroyed.
- It is safe to take COVID-19 vaccines up until the expiration date.

Vaccination Process

- The vaccines are given by trained healthcare professionals.
- The vaccines are given in the upper arm.
- After vaccination, you will be monitored at the site for 30 minutes for any reaction that requires care. Such reactions are uncommon.
- After taking the vaccine you will be given a card that documents your vaccination.
 - You should keep this card.
 - If you are taking the AstraZeneca vaccine, bring the card with you when you come for the second dose.
 - If you lose the card before coming back for your second dose, it will be replaced for free.
- If you feel sick or have a reaction after leaving the vaccination site, it is important to return to the vaccination site for assistance or call 6666.

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- The vaccination team can provide care at the site or refer you to a health facility that can give the care needed.