

Teacher vaccination 101

Teachers and non-teaching staff above the age of 40 are next in line to be vaccinated.



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While vaccination is voluntary, the National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (Naptosa), together with other teacher unions, has urged all eligible education sector staff to embrace this opportunity to be vaccinated.

The long-awaited Johnson & Johnson vaccine suffered some setbacks in the United States after contamination problems at a Covid-19 vaccine plant in Baltimore, which has had a knock-on effect locally.

The J&J vaccine became contaminated with part of the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine, which is also produced at the plant.

The South African government is still awaiting an announcement by the US Food & Drug Administration (FDA) on the manufacturing conditions at the United State factory, which froze the global release of doses of the J&J vaccine.

“We’re eagerly waiting for this to be sorted out so that we can start receiving the two million doses, which are ready for dispatch from the Aspen plant in Gqeberha.

“They’ve been waiting for the go-ahead from their mother company in the US,” said Deputy Health Minister, Dr Joe Phaahla, last week, who was keen for the matter to be resolved soon.

Naptosa has since welcomed the additional J&J vaccine doses that have been secured for the education sector.

According to Naptosa’s Executive Director, Basil Manuel, the Director-General of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) confirmed this at a meeting with the unions on Friday, 4 June 2021.

Manual said the doses were initially expected to arrive on Friday last week, undergo testing on Monday, with vaccination to commence on Wednesday, 9 June 2021.



Contact sports in schools suspended with immediate effect

20 May 2021



However, according to independent media organisation, Bhekisisa, if the consignment of half a million J&J doses is cleared by the FDA, it will only arrive in South Africa by mid to late next week, with an expiry date of 28 June because this is “the only stock available”.

“The shots would therefore have to be used within a couple of weeks,” the publication said.

Bhekisisa quoted Nicholas Crisp, the Health Department Deputy Director-General, who said the Department of Basic Education (DBE) provided his department with staff numbers around 500,000, who need to be vaccinated, which matches up with the supply.

“Most importantly, they came up with a fast-moving mass vaccination plan for the staff at schools, which involved them driving employees to central points in districts,” Crisp told Bhekisisa.

KZN ready to vaccinate educators

The KwaZulu-Natal provincial government, meanwhile, has said it is planning to open an additional 21 new vaccination sites, as the country gears up to inoculate teachers.

According to the provincial government, KwaZulu-Natal will receive 110,400 out of the 500,000 J&J vaccine doses.

According to KwaZulu-Natal, management in their respective districts and circuits will guide educators regarding which sites to visit to be vaccinated.

“Some districts will open new sites, where sites don’t already exist, while others will have to designate their existing sites accordingly to accommodate the teachers,” the province said.

The provincial government is also exploring the possibility of opening the centres at weekends because teachers work during the week.

This how vaccination of teachers will work:

- According to NAPTOSA, a National Task Team, consisting of senior managers of DBE and the Department of Health (DOH), which will coordinate and guide the education sector vaccination has been established.
- DBE will provide the data to DOH of all the targeted employees for registration on the Electronic Vaccination Data System (EVDS).
- Registration will be automatic. DOH will communicate and confirm the vaccination schedules per school and district.
- All employees will be allocated sites and dates for vaccination. The sites are yet to be finalised.
- Public sector schools will be vaccinated first. Thereafter, the independent school sector will be included.
- The beneficiaries will include all the teaching and non-teaching staff in the public sector, inclusive of school governing bodies funded personnel and staff of teacher unions.
- Personnel, who are above the age of 40, will be vaccinated first.
- PERSAL data will be used to register employees on the EVDS.
- DBE will submit the PERSAL data to the DOH and therefore, the beneficiaries will not be required to register.
- Non-PERSAL staff will have their information obtained from relevant data sources.
- Employees will be requested to produce their identity document at the vaccination site.
- Employees on medical aid will also be required to provide information on the medical aid scheme. The money will be claimed from the Medical Aid Schemes at a later stage.
- The DBE will engage with stakeholders on the vaccination process and issue a circular to provinces.

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