

SA to resume Johnson & Johnson vaccine rollout

South Africa will resume the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine rollout on Wednesday in a push to vaccinate 500,000 healthcare workers through the Sisonke Programme.



Image: SANews.gov.za

According to Health Minister, Dr Zweli Mkhize, this move comes after the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (Sahpra) recommendation and Cabinet concurrence.

“We’re looking forward to making up for the lost time by completing this programme in the shortest possible time,” said Mkhize on Monday.

Vaccination sites will now be extended to 95 across the country. These sites will continue to vaccinate healthcare workers during phase one beyond the Sisonke Protocol.

According to Mkhize, government remains committed to inoculate 1.2 million frontline workers under the first phase, which is expected to be wrapped up on 16 May 2021.

“Despite the unforeseen interruption to our programme, the 95 sites will be published in the next issue of the I Choose Vaccination bulletin and on the Health and SA Coronavirus website,” said Mkhize.

The Minister called on healthcare workers, including traditional healers, who have not registered for vaccination to sign up on vaccine.enroll.health.gov.za.

South Africa paused the J&J rollout after the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) placed the vaccine on hold following reports of a rare clotting condition.



SA temporarily suspends J&J jab

14 Apr 2021



However, the United States has since lifted the ban following a thorough safety review.

“It has since been established there is a one in a million chance of getting the clot after the vaccine, and that it appears that women between the ages of 18 and 48 years old are particularly at risk. With such a low probability of developing a clot, all the regulators across the world have recommended the continued use of Johnson and Johnson,” Mkhize explained.

Locally, Mkhize said Sahpra has also added a requirement that all Sisonke participants need to be informed of this potential risk and consent to partaking in the trial with this knowledge.

In addition, Sahpra has recommended that pregnant and lactating women be excluded from the programme at this stage.

“Having said all this, I wish to reassure you all, fellow South Africans, that it is much better to have the vaccine than to avoid taking it for fear of getting a blood clot. In fact, there are many... more cases of blood clots related to the Coronavirus itself, than the one in a million chance of getting a blood clot from the Johnson and Johnson vaccine,” the Minister said.

Mkhize said the single-dose vaccine is effective, easy to use and considered safer to be vaccinated with it than not.

“Let us remember that Johnson and Johnson is currently the best vaccine against the 501Y.V2 variant, which is dominant in this country.”



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15 Apr 2021



Vaccine-Induced Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia (VITT)

Mkhize said if anyone develops headaches or abdominal pain, vomiting, blurry vision or other neurological or abdominal symptoms after receiving the vaccine, they should seek medical attention immediately, as these could be signs of a Vaccine-Induced Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia (VITT).

People presenting with these symptoms may call the Covid-19 hotline on 0800 029 999, use the newly launched Sahpra Med Safety App or call the Sisonke Safety Desk on 0800 014 956.

In addition, Mkhize said the country has secured enough doses to vaccinate at least 45 million people residing in South Africa and that government is working to procure more shots.

"I am therefore thrilled that the first 1.1 million doses of market Johnson and Johnson Covid-19 vaccines are ready for dispatch from the Gqeberha plant," he said, adding that the country is expecting over 650,000 doses of Pfizer before 17 May.

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