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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(General Public)

COVID-19 Vaccine

The Aga Khan University Hospital, Karachi

Last updated on: 19 March 2021

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Questions and Answers

1 Getting vaccinated for COVID-19

1.1 Is it mandatory to get vaccinated against COVID-19?

The COVID-19 vaccine is not mandatory. However, it is considered in the best interest of everyone around to get vaccinated against any disease, including COVID-19, to safeguard people's health and wellbeing.

1.2 Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

If you are over the age of 18, you should get vaccinated against COVID-19 if it is being offered to you. However, some groups are advised against getting the vaccine; for example those with uncontrolled seizures or those who are on powerful blood thinners. However, people on mild blood thinners, such as aspirin, can get the vaccine. If you have concerns regarding the medications you are taking and if the vaccine is safe, please contact your healthcare provider.

1.3 Should I get vaccinated if I have already had COVID-19?

Yes, you should get vaccinated against COVID-19 even if you have already had the disease. However, if you are currently infected, you must wait for your symptoms to resolve, your isolation period to end and if you were prescribed steroids, these must also have ended. This applies to either of the doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

1.4 Is it safe to get this vaccine if I am trying to get pregnant, am pregnant or breastfeeding?

Yes, experts believe that the current COVID-19 vaccines are unlikely to pose a specific risk for people who are pregnant or trying to get pregnant or breastfeeding. However, you may discuss with your physician if you have concerns.

1.5 How many vaccine doses will be needed?

The SinoPharm vaccine currently being administered requires two doses, taken 21 days apart. As other kinds of COVID-19 vaccines become available, the dosage requirement may vary according to the type of the vaccine. Please ensure your second dose is of the same vaccine type as your first dose.

1.6 What if the second dose is missed?

If the vaccine you received recommends two doses and you miss the second dose, it is best that you take it within seven (7) days of the missed date. However, if for some reason the second dose is delayed further, you shoud get the second dose as soon as possible.

1.7 How long should I wait to get any other vaccine, after getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

After getting vaccinated for COVID-19, you must wait 14 days, before getting any other type of vaccine, for any other disease or condition.

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1.8 What does it mean when it is said the COVID-19 vaccines are being given in a 'phased approach'?

The phased approach has been determined by the government for the government-supplied vaccine(s). In the first phase, patient-facing healthcare workers (HCW) under the age of 60 years were vaccinated, followed by other HCWs, and people over the age of 60. Eventually, as more vaccine doses become available, more groups will have the opportunity to get vaccinated.

1.9 How can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Please register yourself by sending your CNIC number (without dashes) through an SMS to the Government COVID-19 Helpline 1166. You will then receive instructions and a PIN, and will be informed if you can go anytime or need to wait for a vaccination date.

1.10 Can I get vaccinated if I participated in the CanSino trial?

If you participated in the CanSino trial and are due to be vaccinated in the current phase, please contact the Clinical Trials Unit at the institution where you participated for more information and the way forward.

2 COVID-19 vaccination at AKUH

2.1 How can I get vaccinated at AKUH?

Depending on your place of residence, the government may assign you a centre upon your registration. If your centre is AKUH, and you have received a confirmation from the government, please call the AKUH UAN 021-111-911-911 to book your vaccination appointment, and visit on your appointment day/time.

If your centre is not AKUH, you can change your centre by calling the Government COVID-19 Helpline 1166, or visiting the NIMS website: https://nims.nadra.gov.pk/nims/home. Upon confirmation of vaccination and centre change, please call the AKUH UAN 021-111-911-911 to book your vaccination appointment, and visit on your appointment day/time.

If your message says that you can go to any site, and would like to come to AKUH for vaccination, please call the AKUH UAN 021-111-911-911 to book your vaccination appointment, and visit on your appointment day/time.

Process of getting vaccinated at AKUH

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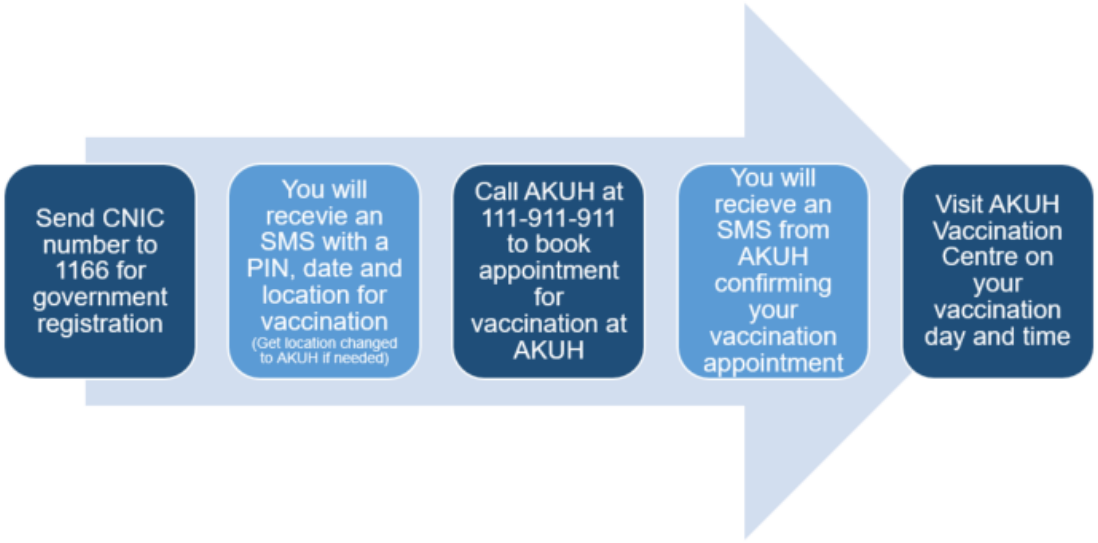

2.2 Will AKUH still administer my vaccination if I have not had my vaccination centre changed?

It is advisable to get your vaccination centre changed by calling the Government COVID-19 Helpline 1166, or visiting the NIMS website: https://nims.nadra.gov.pk/nims/home and wait for confirmation of this change before booking your vaccination appointment at AKUH, to avoid any problems.

2.3 Do I need an appointment to get vaccinated at AKUH?

Yes. Once you have received your vaccination confirmation from the government, please call the AKUH UAN 021-111-911-911 to book your vaccination appointment, and come on your appointment day/time.

2.4 Can I walk-in to get vaccinated at AKUH?

No, vaccination at AKUH is by appointment only. Once you have received your vaccination confirmation from the government, please call the AKUH UAN 021-111-911-911 to book your vaccination appointment, and come on your appointment day/time.

2.5 I am a healthcare worker. Do I still need to make an appointment at AKUH?

Yes, everyone, including healthcare workers, need to make an appointment to get vaccinated at AKUH.

2.6 I need to come for my second dose. Do I still need to make an appointment at AKUH?

Yes, you need to make an appointment to get vaccinated at AKUH even if you are coming in for the second dose.

2.7 Where is the AKUH COVID-19 Vaccination Centre?

A dedicated COVID-19 vaccination centre has been set up at AKUH Stadium Road campus, next to the COVID-19 Screening and Testing Zone, just before AKUH's Gate 1 on Stadium Road.

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2.8 What are the timings of the AKUH COVID-19 Vaccination Centre?

The AKUH COVID-19 Vaccination Centre is operational Monday to Friday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and is closed on Saturday, Sunday and on public holidays.

2.9 Which documents should I bring along on the day of my vaccination?

Please bring your original CNIC and filled vaccination forms, downloadable from: http://bit.ly/COVIDVaccineDocs.

2.10 How long is the waiting time for the vaccine administration?

The total time from arrival to departure, including registration, vitals check, vaccination administration and post vaccination observation is expected to be around 90 minutes in most circumstances.

2.11 Is there a waiting area/seating arrangement for the elderly?

A limited number of wheelchairs and limited seating is available for people who visit for vaccination.

2.12 Is the COVID-19 vaccine being offered at Clifton Medical Services or the AKUH Secondary Hospitals?

Currently, the COVID-19 vaccination services are only being offered by AKUH at the Stadium Road campus.

2.13 Which brand of the COVID-19 vaccine are being or will be administered at AKUH?

The Government of Pakistan has approved four vaccines for its citizens: SinoPharm, Astrazeneca, Sputnik-V and CanSino. The vaccine available for administration at AKUH at any given point will be dependent on factors such as availability, ease of storage and administration.

- SinoPharm: This vaccine has already been imported by the Government of Pakistan. The technology is well-established and uses inactivated viral particles. This vaccine is 86% effective in preventing severe disease and hospitalisation. The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19, but you can still get infected from other people.
- Astra Zeneca, Sputnik-V and CanSino: These vaccines are made from weakened versions of common cold viruses (human adenovirus for Sputnik and Chimpanzee Adenovirus for Astrazeneca and CanSino), which have been changed to look more like the coronavirus. These vaccines cannot give you COVID-19, but you can still get infected from other people. Research has shown these vaccines to be highly effective in helping you to fight the disease.

2.14 Will I have to pay for the COVID-19 vaccine?

Currently, the government of Pakistan is providing the vaccine free-of-charge to its citizens. The Aga Khan University Hospital is, in turn, administering this vaccine free-of-charge. This is subject to change.

2.15 Will the COVID-19 vaccines be available for paid vaccination at AKUH?

Once vaccines are made commercially available by the government, AKUH will consider offering them.

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3 What to expect with the COVID-19 vaccine?

3.1 What are the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine?

The common side effects include pain, redness or swelling at the injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle or joint pain, fever, chills, nausea, and swollen lymph nodes. Having these side effects is a good sign and indicates that your immune system is responding well to the vaccine. Very rarely, severe allergic reactions can occur within a very short time after taking the vaccine. Talk to your doctor before taking the vaccine if you have a history of severe allergies.

3.2 Does the absence of side effects mean the vaccine did not work?

No. Many people experience no side effects after taking the vaccine.

3.3 Can I take medicines to manage the side effects?

Fever, redness at the injection site, and fatigue are caused by your immune system's response to the vaccine. Taking medication to manage these could decrease the level of immunity that develops, especially during the first few days after getting vaccinated. However, if you are very uncomfortable, you can take anti-fever or anti-inflammatory medications; please check with your physician.

3.4 What happens if I get seriously sick after getting the vaccine?

If you are getting your vaccine at the AKUH Vaccination Centre, you will be required to spend a mandatory 30-minute period of observation for AEFI (adverse events following immunization). After this time, the likelihood of a reaction is negligible. However, if you feel very sick, you should rush to the Emergency Department. Please note after millions of doses given globally, cases of adverse events have been negligible.

3.5 Where can I report any side effects?

If you are getting your vaccine at the AKUH Vaccination Centre, you will be observed for 30 minutes after receiving the vaccine. After this if you experience any adverse reactions or events, please speak with your physician or visit the nearest Emergency. You should also log any side effects on https://nims.nadra.gov.pk/nims/sideeffect.

3.6 What adverse events for the SinoPharm vaccine have been reported at AKUH so far?

People who have received the vaccine have reported mild pain at the injection site, which is very common with most vaccinations. Other side effects are tiredness, fever, headache and flu-like symptoms which usually resolve within 1 to 3 days.

3.7 Will there be any long-term side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine?

In general, vaccines are not known to cause long term side effects. Most side effects occur within six weeks of receiving the vaccine.

3.8 Should I delay the second dose if I start experiencing symptoms of COVID-19?

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19, wait for these symptoms to pass and get vaccinated once you feel better. Please check with your physician.

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4 Life after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine

4.1 Will I need to wear a mask after getting vaccinated?

Yes. The COVID-19 vaccines currently available do not offer 100% protection, and the risk of getting infected remains. In addition, not everyone will get vaccinated and the vaccine may not work for everyone who gets vaccinated. Therefore, it is better to continue to wear your mask and practice SOPs.

4.2 Are there any tests to determine whether the vaccine worked?

Currently, there is no test available to confirm whether you are protected. It takes at least two weeks after the second dose before maximum immunity is achieved.

4.3 Does a vaccinated person present a risk to unvaccinated members in the household?

The vaccines currently being offered do not contain live virus. However, you can still get infected with COVID-19 from other people, after being vaccinated and you can spread the infection to other members of your household. Therefore, it is important to wear masks and practice hand-hygiene and physical distancing even after getting vaccinated.

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