



Ministry of Information &amp; Broadcasting

## “Vaccines are effective”

# Go for vaccination after 6 weeks of testing positive for mild COVID-19 or 6 weeks after discharge from hospitalization in case of severe COVID-19: Dr. Shekhar Salkar

Posted On: 26 APR 2021 4:25PM by PIB Mumbai

**Mumbai/Goa, 26 April 2021**

Vaccination is a weapon with which we can control the pandemic, stated Dr. Shekhar Salkar. “As on date, we have sufficient data of vaccines given to people, and these are not only scientific data. Side-effects have been found to be minimum, even lesser than 0.1%. We need to understand that vaccine not only provides immunity, but prevents people from getting infected for a second time. It also decreases the chances of hospitalization due to COVID-19. Most importantly, it will bring down the figure of deaths due to COVID-19 significantly”, said the Consultant Oncologist at Manipal Hospital in Goa. Dr. Salkar was speaking in a webinar today, on “COVID-19: Why Get Vaccinated?” organized by Press Information Bureau in collaboration with the Regional Outreach Bureau and the Dempo College of Commerce and Economics in Goa.



“In the US, almost 70 million people have been vaccinated till now, out of which, only 5,000 people have been infected after vaccination and 78 patients succumbed to the virus. It means that the vaccines are more than 99.99% successful”. Speaking on the behalf of the medical community, Dr. Salkar said, “Though 78 may just be a number for us, we want to save every man on earth”. But, sometimes it is not possible with just medicines. “I think now it has been proved beyond doubt that vaccine is a saviour for us”.

**Vaccine hesitancy is reducing**

"In the first two months, the uptake of vaccines was not much. But, now at a time of the advent of second wave, the number of people coming forward to get vaccinated has gone up. The Government and the vaccine manufacturers are trying their best to ramp up production so that people can take it faster", said Dr. Salkar.

The doctor reminded that pregnant women, lactating mothers and those who are allergic should not go for vaccination and it has been stated in the government guidelines also. Those having some significant allergy must inform the doctor about it while going for vaccination, advised the doctor. Stating his personal experience of monitoring vaccination of 5-6 thousand individuals, Dr. Salkar said that he did not come across any case of allergic phenomenon. However, in case it is known that a person is allergic to penicillin or some particular medicines, preparation can be taken like keeping steroids and some medicines handy by the medical staff. Stating these, Dr. Salkar commented, "It is extremely safe to take vaccines and all the people aged above 18 years should try to vaccinate themselves as early as possible".

In this connection, the doctor urged all not to endorse and forward any unverified news about vaccines coming on social media as many unsubstantiated and false advices about vaccines are doing the rounds. Unless 70% of the population is vaccinated, we cannot conclude that a significant population has been vaccinated, said Dr. Salkar. However, it is a huge number, admits the medical professional. But, within a fixed time limit, we need to vaccinate maximum people to get best results. "If I have to live, I have to abide by what scientists tell me", he added.

### **Duration of immunity**

In reply to a query on the duration of immunity about vaccination, Dr. Salkar stated, "It is difficult to answer as the earliest COVID-19 vaccination in the world started just in last December. As per data available till now, it is believed to last for at least 6-8 months". So, if a larger population gets vaccinated within 6-8 months, everybody will have some amount of immunity in the body, said the doctor. "After that, even if anti-bodies in the body become less in number, the recognition of the virus (foreign body) by the body will be easier", he added.

Further, he also cautioned that until a significant population gets vaccinated, we cannot afford to take our guards down, that is, we have to wear masks in public places, maintain physical distancing and follow all Covid Appropriate Behaviours.

In reply to an audience query, Dr. Salkar advised that in case a person tests positive after the first dose of vaccination, then the second dose is to be taken after 6 weeks of testing positive. Also, first dose of the vaccine should be taken after 6 weeks from the date of testing positive in case of mild disease and home isolation patients. However, serious and hospitalized patients should wait for six weeks from the date of discharge from hospital, stated Dr. Salkar.

An audience asked the doctor that if people develop COVID symptoms before taking the jab, whether they should go ahead and take the vaccine. In reply to this, Dr Salkar said, "You must get yourself tested first. Yes, tests fail some times. But in case of active fever and other symptoms, I will not advise you to take vaccine. Wait for some time for the fever to subside and then take the vaccine". But it is not required to compulsorily do RT-PCR for asymptomatic people before vaccination, he added.

In reply to another query on the consequences of taking the second dose after a longer than scheduled time-period, Dr. Salkar stated that antibodies may last even if the second dose is extended by 6 weeks to 3 months. "After taking the first dose, the chances of



getting COVID-19 reduces by 65%, and after the second dose, it comes down by 80-90%", informed the doctor. Six weeks is the standard gap between two doses. The doctor urged everyone to try and not to miss the second dose on designated date.

The doctor further urged people to take whatever vaccine is available as "all the vaccines available are 99.99 percentage successful in prevention of death due to COVID-19". However, both the doses of the vaccine have to be of the same vaccine.

Speaking about minor side-effects like discoloration and rashes on skin, heaviness of hands, Dr Salkar said, "There are treatments available for such minor side-effects and it is not life-threatening". Thus, vaccination should not be avoided as it saves people from death. On the issue of not having felt the longterm side-effects of the vaccines developed just after the pandemic has hit the world, Dr Salkar opines, "First you have to survive the pandemic to see the long-term side-effects. These vaccines are preventing deaths".

On the issue of blood-clots after taking vaccine, Dr. Salkar said "Sometimes people on blood-thinners, Acitrom or Warfarin may get Hematoma. Don't rub (the point of injecting the vaccine), just hold tight for, atleast, 5 mins".



The CoWin portal is also programmed to record the vaccine which is being given in the first dose so that the second dose is also of the same vaccine, added Dr. Salkar. In this connection, Dr. Salkar also mentioned that the final vaccination certificate which is being given also "has a lot of weight" as many countries are not providing visa if a person has not taken even a single dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

Ms Gauri Tamba, Vice Principal of Dempo College also participated in the webinar. Shri DV Vinod Kumar, Deputy Director of PIB in Goa made the opening remarks in the webinar attended by a large number of people from around the country.

Link to the webinar may be accessed **here**.

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DJM/SC/DR



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