

Busting Myths of Vaccination

Government of India is looking for import of Vaccination For Swift Vaccination of entire Population

Adequacy of Manufacturing Capacity not an issue

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Government of India has been supporting the efforts of States and UTs for effective management of COVID patients in vaccination, under the ‘Whole of Government’ approach since January this year.

COVID being a Pandemic with worldwide impact, there has been a global high demand of vaccines with limited number of manufacturers with limited manufacturing capacity across countries. India with a population of 1.4 billion houses a substantial share of the World Population, estimated to be 7.7 billion by the World Bank.

In India, two vaccines were approved by the regulatory body in January 2021. The two manufacturers: Serum Institute and Bharat Biotech had a capacity to provide around 1 crore doses in the month of December, 2020.

National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for COVID-19 (NEGVAC) was already established in August 2020 to provide guidance on all aspects of vaccine introduction including prioritization of beneficiaries, procurement, vaccine selection and its delivery.

The priority of beneficiaries for COVID-19 vaccination in India has been done based on the review of available scientific evidence, guidelines proposed by WHO, global examples and practices followed in other countries with the primary objective of:

- Protecting the Healthcare and Frontline workers and thereby the Pandemic response system.
- Preventing deaths due to COVID19 and protect individuals at highest risk and vulnerability of mortality due to disease.

Accordingly, the vaccination drive in our country has been sequentially expanded to cover the prioritized groups starting with Health Care Workers (HCWs) on 16th Jan'21 followed by Front Line Workers (FLWs) from 2nd Feb'21, persons aged 60 years and above and those aged 45-59 years with identified 20 comorbidities were covered from 1st Mar'21. Subsequently, from 1st Apr'21, all persons aged 45 years and above are eligible for vaccination.

Such an approach has yielded positive results by achieving more than 90% 1st dose coverage amongst registered HCWs and around 84% coverage of 1stdose amongst registered FLWs thereby protecting this cohort who is involved in providing Health Care Services, Surveillance and Containment activities amid the 2nd wave of COVID-19 pandemic.

Similarly, with the focus on reducing mortality, the next phase involved providing vaccination to persons aged 60 years and above and those aged 45-59 years with co-morbidities from 1st March'21 followed by all persons aged 45 years and above from 1st April'21.

The Phase-III of COVID-19 vaccination has begun from 1st May'21 wherein all citizens aged 18 years and above are eligible for vaccination. A 'Liberalised Pricing and Accelerated National COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy' was adopted on 1st May 2021 which is guiding the ongoing Phase-III of COVID-19 vaccination Drive. This strategy aims at incentivizing the vaccine manufacturers to ramp up the vaccine production and also attract new manufacturers. This will augment the vaccine production resulting in wider availability of vaccines resulting in flexibility in pricing, procurement & administration of vaccines ultimately resulting in improved coverage of vaccination.

As of date, India is using three vaccines against COVID-19 in its immunization drive; this includes two made in India vaccines - Serum Institute of India's Covishield and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin who have supplied about 7.92 crore vaccine doses in the month of May 2021

The manufacturing capacities have been ramped up. Vaccine being a biological product takes time for harvesting and quality testing. This cannot be done overnight to ensure a safe product. Thus, increase in capacity of manufacturing too needs to be a guided process.

The Russian Sputnik V is the third vaccine to get approval from the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for restricted use in emergency situation and is being used in few private hospitals which are expected to be increased over the coming days.

Govt. of India, through NEGVAC, is doing regular interaction with national and international vaccine manufacturers like Pfizer, Moderna etc. to make the COVID-19 vaccines available in country.

The concrete actions are a stern indication that Govt. of India is making all out efforts to increase the vaccine production in the country as well as attracting the foreign vaccine manufacturers to supply the required vaccine doses for national covid vaccination programme.

Despite the constraints of availability, India has fared well in covering 200 million persons in only 130 days which is the third largest coverage in the world.

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HFW/India seeking import of Vaccines/

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