NATIONAL PRIMARY HEALTH CARE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON COVID-19 VACCINATION

National Primary Health Care Development Agency Frequently Asked Questions And Answers On Covid-19 Vaccination

COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS DISEASE)

1. What's COVID-19?

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus, known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2). This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.

2. Where do coronavirus come from?

Coronaviruses are viruses that circulate among animals, with some infecting humans. Bats are considered natural hosts of these viruses, and several other species of animals are also known to act as sources. For instance, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) is transmitted to humans from camels, while Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-1 (SARS-CoV-1) is transmitted to humans from civet cats.

3. What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, dry cough, and difficulty in breathing. Some patients may have body aches and pains, loss of smell, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat, or diarrhea. These symptoms usually start mildly and gradually become serious. Some people become infected but do not develop any symptoms and do not feel unwell. Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing hospitalization. Around 1 out of every 6 people who get COVID-19 becomes seriously ill and develops difficulty in breathing. Older people, and those with underlying medical conditions like high blood pressure, heart problems, cancer, or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness.

4. How does COVID-19 Spread?

COVID-19 spreads from person to person (human-to-human transmission) through direct contact. It is currently estimated that, in the absence of physical distancing and other preventive measures, one infected person will on average infect between two and three other people.

The virus is transmitted mainly via respiratory droplets and aerosols when sneezing, coughing, or interacting with others in close proximity (usually less than two metres). These droplets can be inhaled or can land on surfaces that others come into contact with and are then infected when they touch their nose, mouth or eyes. The virus can survive on surfaces from between several hours (copper, cardboard) up to a few days (plastic and stainless steel). However, the amount of viable virus declines over time and may not always be present in sufficient amount to cause infection.

The incubation period for COVID-19 (i.e. the time between exposure to the virus and the onset of symptoms) is currently estimated to be between one and 14 days.

We know that the virus can be transmitted when people who are infected show symptoms such as coughing. A person who is infected can also transmit the virus up to two days before they show symptoms; the extent to which such asymptomatic infections contribute to the overall transmission is not currently clear.

5. How can I protect myself from getting infected?

If you are healthy, the use of a medical face mask when visiting busy, closed places reduces the spread of the infection in the community. Always follow local recommendations regarding the use of masks in public spaces.

Avoid touching your face
The virus can enter your body via your eyes, nose and/or mouth, so it is important to avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.

Wash your hands
Frequent washing of hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or cleaning hands thoroughly with alcohol-based solutions, gels or tissues is recommended in all settings.

Stay away from infected persons
Avoid having close contacts with people infected with COVID-19.

Avoid social gatherings
Avoid physical meetings, events and other social gatherings in areas with ongoing community transmission and follow local recommendations applicable to mass gatherings.

Use a face mask
Wear a face mask indoors and outdoors whenever physical distancing with other people cannot be guaranteed.

6. If I am sick, how do I protect my loved ones and others?

Use a face mask
If you are infected, the use of a medical face mask reduces the risk of you infecting other people.

Cough and sneeze etiquette
Cough or sneeze into your elbow or use a disposable tissue. If you use a tissue, dispose of it carefully after a single use and then wash your hands.

Stay at home if you are sick
If you feel unwell, stay at home. If you develop any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, call your healthcare provider for advice immediately.

Keep physical distancing'
Physical distancing' means physically staying apart from other people. Maintain social contact with friends, family and colleagues from a distance instead.

Self-isolation
Self-isolate if you know you are infected with COVID-19, or if you have any symptoms of an acute respiratory infection like a cough, fever, sore throat, or runny nose.

COVID-19 VACCINES

*COVID-19 vaccines aim to **prevent COVID-19 disease** by triggering an immune response.*
*COVID-19 vaccines are being developed following the same legal requirements for **quality, safety,** and **efficacy** as for all other vaccines.*
Like all vaccines, the effects of COVID-19 vaccines are tested first in the laboratory, including in animals, and then in human volunteers.

*The National Regulatory Authority, such as NAFDAC, is the agency in charge of evaluation and supervision of medicinal products. It will evaluate COVID-19 vaccines against the **same high standards** as for all other vaccines before they can be released for use. NAFDAC will continually **monitor side effects** in people who have received COVID-19 vaccines and identify and evaluate new information that arises on the **benefits** and **safety** of COVID-19 vaccines promptly.*

7. **Were safety procedures and standards not compromised to develop and produce COVID-19 vaccine in less than one year, when it took 5-10 years or more to develop and produce other well known, safe and efficacious childhood vaccines and others like yellow fever and polio vaccines?**

   No, standards were not compromised nor were safety procedures ignored in producing COVID-19 vaccine. It is huge misconception to assume that the work on COVID-19 vaccine started when the pandemic began.
   Prior to the development of the COVID-19 vaccines, scientists had experimented and perfected a fast and flexible method- plug and play-to revolutionise vaccine development and production.
   Researchers at Oxford University had constructed ChAdOx1 - or Chimpanzee Adenovirus Oxford One and used it as the building block for vaccine against almost any disease. Before COVID-19, over three hundred people had been given ChAdOx1 based-vaccines for diseases ranging from flu to Zika virus, and prostate cancer to the tropical disease chikungunya. The ChAdOx1 is modified to contain the genetic blueprints for whatever you want to train the immune system to attack. ChAdOx1 is in essentially a sophisticated, microscopic postman, and scientists then change the package, such as COVID-19 spike proteins to be delivered by the ChAdOx1 postman.

8. **Why should I get vaccinated for COVID-19?**

   It is strongly recommended that you get vaccinated against COVID-19. The vaccine will protect you from getting infected, sick, or dying. By getting vaccinated, you also protect your loved ones and your community.

9. **How do I get vaccinated against COVID-19?**

   Nigeria plans to introduce the COVID-19 vaccine in the 1st Quarter of 2021 to halt the ongoing spread of the virus and to save lives. Once the vaccine is available, there will be public announcements on those to be vaccinated through the mass media and traditional channels in the communities on when and where to get the vaccine.

10. **Can the vaccine infect me with COVID-19?**

No! the vaccine cannot infect you with COVID-19. It is meant to protect you from COVID -19 infection. Once your vaccination doses are complete, you become protected.

11. If I have had COVID-19 and have recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated?

Yes. NPHCDA recommends that you get vaccinated even if you have already had COVID-19, because you can be infected more than once. While you may have some short-term antibody protection after recovering from COVID-19, we do not know how long this protection will last. Hence, it is recommended that that you get vaccinated because you can be re-infected.

12. Can pregnant and lactating mothers receive the vaccine?

NO! Studies are yet to be conducted to ascertain the safety of the vaccine on pregnant and lactating mothers.

13. Can the COVID-19 vaccine alter human genetic information (DNA)?

No! COVID - 19 vaccine does not alter your DNA. It triggers an immune response that will protect your body against the virus if encountered. Once you and your community members are protected, the chances of the spread of the disease are reduced.

14. Does COVID-19 vaccine contain a micro-chip?

NO! COVID-19 – 19 vaccine does not contain any harmful substance or micro-chip. All vaccines including COVID-19 vaccines are manufactured under strict compliance with WHO guidelines. Also, before the vaccine is administered in Nigeria, NAFDAC will certify it safe for human use.

15. Is it safe to get a COVID-19 vaccine if I have an underlying medical condition?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccination is especially important for people with underlying medical conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, cancer, etc. People with these conditions are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19. The vaccine does not cause the disease but helps the body to develop immunity against the disease.

16. Is it better to get natural immunity to COVID-19 rather than immunity from a vaccine?

No. There is no guarantee that if you get COVID-19, you will get immunity. In fact, you may get serious illness and die or have debilitating symptoms that may persist for months. Even if you survive the disease, you may only develop short-term antibody protection after recovery from COVID-19, we do not know how long this protection lasts. Therefore, vaccination is the best protection, and it is safe.

17. Will the shot hurt or make me sick?

Mild side effects may occur as in any other vaccinations. However, they are signs that the vaccine is working to build your immunity. This does not mean you have COVID-19. If they do not go away in a few days, please see your doctor.

18. How do I know if COVID-19 vaccine is safe?

Before a vaccine is certified for use, it must receive approval from WHO. Here in Nigeria, in addition to WHO approval, all vaccines including COVID-19 vaccine are certified safe for use by NAFDAC. Even when in use, NAFDAC continues to monitor the vaccine to ensure it causes no harm.

19. Do I still need to wear facemask after vaccination?

Yes, you are advised to continue to practice the preventive measures - wear your face masks, frequently wash your hands with soap and running water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, observe physical distancing and avoid large gathering and unnecessary travels to stop community transmission of COVID-19.

This is because getting the vaccine does not stop you from getting exposed to someone who has been infected, but the vaccination and development of immunity will stop the infection from progressing to disease – hence you still need to practice the preventive measures.