

## COVID-19 National Vaccination Campaign

### FAQs about COVID-19 Vaccine

February 10, 2022

#### A- New procedures from the Ministry of Public Health

##### 1- Vaccinating students in schools

To speed up the process of vaccinating students in educational institutions, the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education have established the following mechanism:

- Each educational institution sends a COVID-19 vaccine consent form to the parents of students born in 2009 and before.
- Parents fill in the information, sign it and return it to the school within a period of maximum 48 hours. The vaccination will take place at the educational institution through a mobile clinic assigned by the Ministry of Public Health.
- It is possible to start registering students aged 5 to 11 years on the COVID-19 vaccine platform as a preparatory step for giving them the vaccine later.
- Speeding up the registration process and obtaining approval from the students' families actively contributes to accelerating students' vaccination and protection from the COVID-19 virus and its variants.

##### 2- New target groups in the vaccination campaign

The Ministry of Public Health announced the start of COVID-19 vaccination for everyone who is 12 years and above (born 2009 and below). The Ministry of Public Health also announced the opening of COVID-19 vaccine registration for children aged between 5 and 11, as a preparatory step for vaccine administration at a later stage.

##### 3- New procedures for incoming passengers to Lebanon

All passengers wishing to come to Lebanon, **except Children under 12 years age and UNIFIL**, must register on the **MOPH PASS** platform of the Ministry of Public Health through the following website: <https://pass.moph.gov.lb/> and to make sure that the information sent is correct, before obtaining a **MOPH PASS**.

##### 4- Offline registration on the COVAX platform

It is now possible to conduct offline registration on the COVID-19 vaccine platform COVAX. Registration will be instant, therefore there won't be a need to send SMS messages or verification codes. The offline registration platform is designed to enable

field workers and volunteers to expedite the COVID-19 vaccine registration process in areas with low internet coverage. Associations and organizations wishing to use this new tool can send an email to [fatima@bddacademy.com](mailto:fatima@bddacademy.com) from Beirut Digital District to onboard their establishments.

#### 5- Registering doses administrated outside Lebanon

The Ministry of Public Health has set up a new mechanism that allows vaccination centers to register on the COVAX platform the administrated vaccines for people coming to Lebanon, and who have received their first or second or both doses outside Lebanon, at their request and their personal responsibility. These doses will be registered in addition to the second or third dose administrated in Lebanon. All administrated doses will appear on the Lebanese vaccination certificate only, not on the certificate obtained from the country of origin.

#### 6- Is vaccination against COVID-19 mandatory?

Vaccination against COVID-19 is optional and not mandatory. However, and based on Resolution No. 1415 issued by the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, all workers in many sectors must be fully vaccinated (two doses) by approved vaccines or undergo at their own expense a PCR twice per week.

#### 7- Conditions for receiving three doses of the COVID-19 vaccine

- **Dose 1:** Born in 2009 and before and hasn't been vaccinated yet.
- **Dose 2:** Received the first dose at least 21 days ago.
- **Dose 3:** Received the second dose at least 5 months ago.

#### 8- Reporting side effects after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine

If you experience any of the following side effects after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine:

- Pain, redness or swelling where you received the injection.
- An increase in body temperature.
- Feeling of body aches, tiredness, headache, vomiting, chills, diarrhea, skin rash, difficulty breathing and other symptoms.

**These must be reported through one of the following methods:**

- The COVID-19 vaccine platform, by following the following steps:
  - Refer to the link you received in the SMS when you registered on the COVAX COVID-19 Vaccine Platform
  - Enter your mobile phone number and passcode

- Click on: "Report a side accident"
- Click on "Add"
- Answer the questions in the form according to the symptoms you are experiencing

Or

- Call the COVID-19 Vaccine Hotline 1214

Or

- Communicate with the center where you received the vaccine.

## **B- Information about the OMICRON variant**

### **9- What is the Omicron variant?**

The World Health Organization (WHO) has designated the Omicron variant as a new COVID-19 variant that is spreading very quickly. Earliest cases were detected on 9 November and reported to WHO on 24 November 2021. Preliminary evidence suggests there may be an increased risk of reinfection with this variant, as compared to other variants of concern.

### **10- Do PCR tests still work on this variant?**

The widely used PCR and antigen-based rapid diagnostic tests continue to detect infection of COVID-19, including Omicron.

### **11- Do current vaccines still work on this variant?**

The current vaccines protect against severe symptoms, reduce deaths and the need for hospital admission after infection with the Omicron variant. According to scientists, the emergence of some variants does not make these vaccines ineffective, and this has been shown by some studies that were conducted in laboratories around the world. The recent emergence of Omicron highlights the importance of getting vaccinated, and of administering the third dose of COVID-19 vaccine to people who are at high risk of complications, such as health workers and the elderly.

### **12- Is the Omicron variant more contagious?**

Omicron is spreading more quickly than other variants. Based on the information available, WHO believes it is likely that Omicron will outpace the Delta variant where there is COVID-19 transmission.

### **C- Information about COVID-19 variants**

#### **13- What are the COVID-19 variants?**

There are many COVID-19 variants, but the most famous ones are Alpha, Delta, and Omicron.

#### **14- What is the Delta Variant? Can it still be found in Lebanon?**

The Delta variant is a COVID-19 variant. It is twice as infectious as the original strain of COVID-19, and is approximately 50% more contagious than other detected mutations, including the Alpha strain. The Delta variant is still present in Lebanon, but at a much lower rate than the Omicron variant.

### **D- COVID-19 vaccines in the COVID-19 National Vaccination Campaign**

#### **15- How much does the COVID-19 vaccine cost?**

All vaccines provided by the Ministry of Public Health are **free** of charge for targeted groups and all residents on the Lebanese territory.

#### **16- Can taking the COVID-19 vaccine itself lead to infection with COVID-19?**

No, taking the COVID-19 vaccine will not lead to infection with COVID-19, the vaccine provides protection from moderate to severe symptoms. A vaccinated person can become infected and transmit the virus to others, so it is necessary to adhere to COVID-19 preventive measures on an ongoing basis.

#### **17- Can a person get the vaccine through his/her doctor?**

There is currently no mechanism for obtaining the vaccine through a private doctor.

#### **18- What is a vaccination marathon?**

In cooperation with the accredited COVID-19 vaccine centers and in accordance with the National Vaccines Deployment Plan, the Ministry of Public Health seeks to target the largest number of the population with the vaccine. The Ministry has therefore been organizing vaccination marathons since June 2021 at several COVID-19 vaccination centers accredited by the Ministry of Public Health, where new age groups are targeted, and people are supported in the COVID-19 vaccine registration.

### 19- What is the Walk-in vaccination?

Every person registered on the COVID-19 vaccine platform and is part of the target group for the COVID-19 vaccine, can head to the nearest COVID-19 vaccine center accredited by the Ministry of Public Health without having a prior appointment and during vaccination days. **However, you must contact the center prior to double check on the working hours.** As a reminder, you must bring the identification document used in the registration process for any unscheduled vaccination.

### 20- What is the difference between the different COVID-19 vaccines?

The currently available COVID-19 vaccines differ in terms of type and method of preparation (mRNA vaccine / BIBP vaccine, etc.). However, all COVID-19 vaccines are effective and contribute to controlling the pandemic by reducing the number of deaths and number of people who need intensive care. Therefore, it is recommended to use any COVID-19 vaccine that has received an Emergency Use Authorization EUA.

### 21- Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?

COVID-19 vaccines have been tested to ensure their safety in the short term, and till date minimal side effects have been reported. There are strict precautions in place to help ensure the safety of all COVID-19 vaccines. Before receiving validation from WHO and national regulatory agencies for emergency use, COVID-19 vaccines must undergo rigorous testing in clinical trials to prove that they meet internationally agreed benchmarks for safety and efficacy. As with all vaccines, WHO and regulatory authorities will continuously monitor the use of COVID-19 vaccines to identify and respond to any safety issues that might arise. Through that process, we ascertain that they remain safe for use around the world. All COVID-19 vaccines available in Lebanon are administered to millions of people in many countries around the world and have been shown to be safe and effective.

### 22- What side effects should I expect from taking COVID-19 vaccines?

Like with any vaccine, some people will experience mild to moderate side effects after being vaccinated against COVID-19. This is a normal sign that the body is developing protection. Side effects to COVID-19 vaccines include fever, tiredness, headache, muscle ache, chills, diarrhea and pain or redness at the injection site. Most side effects go away within a few days on their own. If you are worried that the side effects you are experiencing are unusual, if the pain in the arm where you got the injection gets worse

after 24 hours, or your side effects don't go away in a few days, contact your healthcare provider for advice.

More serious or long-lasting side effects to COVID-19 vaccines are possible but extremely rare such as difficulty breathing, chest pain, confusion, loss of speech or mobility after your vaccine. If these occur, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

**23- What happens if a person couldn't take the next dose?**

Adherence to the dates of the COVID-19 vaccine doses ensure that the required level of immunity is obtained and the maximum benefit from the vaccine is ensured. Therefore, any delay should be avoided. If a person cannot receive the dose on time, he/she should contact the COVID-19 vaccination center or 1214 to get the earliest possible appointment.

**24- Why was the third dose initiated?**

The objective of an additional dose in the primary series is to enhance the immune response, in order to establish a sufficient level of effectiveness against COVID-19 and its variants. Immunocompromised individuals and older adults often fail to mount a protective immune response after a standard primary series with some vaccines.

**25- How long does the immunity provided by the COVID-19 vaccine last?**

It is still early to answer whether the COVID-19 vaccine will provide long-term protection. More research is needed before giving a definitive answer. For this reason, and with sufficient information available, the booster doses have been approved to ensure continuous protection against the new variants of COVID-19.

**26- If the administrated COVID-19 vaccine requires more than one dose, can the second dose be from a different COVID-19 vaccine?**

Based on the recommendations of the Scientific Committee at the Ministry of Public Health, doses of the COVID-19 vaccine can be mixed from two different vaccines, as some studies have proven the effectiveness of mix-and-match. Mix-and-match is used in many countries worldwide.

**27- After obtaining the required doses, how much time does the vaccine need to start working and providing the needed protection?**

Two to four weeks after the second dose of vaccination to give the body time to build the necessary immunity.

**28- Can getting vaccinated by the COVID-19 vaccine cause COVID-19 infection?**

No, getting vaccinated by the COVID-19 vaccine does not lead to COVID-19 infection.

**29- Which COVID-19 vaccines have been approved by the WHO till date?**

Till February 2022, Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca/Oxford, Johnson&Johnson, Sinopharm, Sinovac, Bharat Biotech (Bharat BBV 152), and Novavax vaccines have received emergency use authorization by WHO.

**30- If a person was previously infected with COVID-19, can they get vaccinated against COVID-19?**

There are no contraindications, but it is preferable to wait around three months before receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. The person will enjoy “natural immunity” against the COVID-19 virus after infection and will be protected.

**31- What if the vaccine has side effects? Who is responsible in this case?**

The Lebanese Parliament has approved a law for regulating the use of medical products to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, which includes compensating individuals who suffer from severe injuries resulting from the use of the vaccine through the Ministry of Public Health. The Ministry will establish a specialized scientific committee in this regard, to evaluate and determine the damages resulting from the use of the vaccine and financing compensation, if approved, from the general budget reserve and an independent compensation fund, provided that these side effects are reported within a specific period of time after taking the vaccine **through the platform, or the COVID-19 vaccine hotline 1214, or the center where you have received the COVID-19 vaccine.**

**32- Can the influenza vaccine replace the COVID-19 vaccine?**

No, they are two different viruses.

**E- [COVID-19 vaccine registration platform COVAX](#)**

**33- What do I do if I lose the registration link or appointment message?**

If you lose your registration link or appointment message, you should call the 1214 COVID-19 vaccine hotline or:

- Go to [covax.moph.gov.lb](http://covax.moph.gov.lb)
- Click on: Resend the link via SMS
- Fill in the necessary information: first name, date of birth, mobile phone number

- Choose SMS type: registration confirmation/appointment/vaccination record
- Press Send

You will then receive an SMS with the link you want.

**34- What do I do if I register on the COVAX platform and I don't receive the text message code to complete my registration?**

Call the COVID-19 vaccine hotline on 1214 to ask for help.

**35- How can I modify the basic data of the vaccine form (full name, date of birth, ID number, mobile phone number)?**

To modify the following data: father or family name, date of birth, ID number, mobile phone number you can call the COVID-19 vaccine hotline on 1214. To edit the first name, one should fill out the form via this link: <https://ee.kobotoolbox.org/x/o2wz8tMP>.

**36- How can I move to an earlier time the date of the first or second dose due to travel?**

The first or second dose can only be moved to an earlier time in one of the following cases:

- In case of travel: <https://ee.kobotoolbox.org/x/tFyEYLqL>
- Or to perform a medical work: <https://ee.kobotoolbox.org/x/b6gnizFj>

**37- How can medical staff report side effects?**

Medical staff can report side effects by filling out the following form via this link: <https://ee.kobotoolbox.org/x/um9QwK2N>.

**38- How can I receive the third dose?**

You can request to take the third booster dose (provided that 20 weeks have passed since the second dose) via this link: <https://ee.kobotoolbox.org/x/vh2vGpPF>

**39- Can non-Lebanese mobile phone numbers be used to register on the COVID-19 vaccine platform COVAX?**

No, only Lebanese numbers are used to register on the COVAX platform. You can use a Lebanese mobile phone number for someone in your family or for someone trusted in your community. The same mobile phone number can be used by more than one person. Please ensure that you have regular access to the phone number you indicated so that you can receive messages about vaccination.



**40- What should I do if I registered on the COVID-19 vaccine platform and did not receive the required message to complete my data?**

Call the COVID-19 Vaccine Hotline 1214 for assistance.

**F- Vaccine purchase, storage, distribution, and quality control in Lebanon**

**41- How can we make sure that the vaccines we receive are in good condition especially that we suffer in Lebanon from power cuts and bad transportation roads?**

COVID-19 vaccines are transported from the airport to the storage centers using refrigerated vehicles. Continuous temperature monitoring system is in place to ensure there are no temperature fluctuation during excursions. At the storage and vaccination sites, it is a prerequisite for any site to be approved for vaccination to have a continuous power supply and the right cold chain equipment. These sites are assessed before given the approval and they are trained on how to properly store and manage the vaccine.

**42- Who will monitor the COVID-19 vaccine administration in centers?**

The World Bank identified an international independent monitoring mechanism to monitor the roll-out of the vaccination plan. An international independent Third-Party Monitoring agency was selected, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent **IFRC** and will independently monitor the compliance of the vaccination deployment with the National COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment Plan, international standards, and World Bank requirements. Findings of this monitoring mechanism will be shared with a Joint Monitoring Committee that the World Bank will chair. Members of this committee will include relevant UN agencies (WHO, UNICEF, IOM, UNHCR and UNRWA). There will be regular reports shared with the public summarizing the findings.

**43- Lebanon signed an agreement with COVAX. What does COVAX mean?**

The COVAX program is a mechanism designed to ensure rapid, fair, and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines worldwide. The COVAX program is one of the three pillars of the Access to COVID-19 Tools accelerator, and it was launched in April 2020 by the WHO, the European Commission and France in response to this pandemic. As such, governments, global health organizations, manufacturers, scientists, the private sector, civil society, and charitable organizations have been brought together, with the aim of providing innovative and equitable access to COVID-19 diagnosis, treatments, and vaccines.

#### 44- Which healthcare facilities will offer COVID-19 vaccination?

Hospitals and some qualified primary health care centers are accredited as COVID-19 vaccination centers.

#### 45- How can I receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

- 1- Register on the electronic platform that was launched: <https://covax.moph.gov.lb>, a text message is received to specify where and when to have the vaccine.
- 2- Upon arrival at the vaccination center:
  - The beneficiary arrives within the specified time (5-10 minutes for early / late arrival)
  - The beneficiary's data is verified, (according to the document that was used when registering on the platform), the beneficiary is then registered and directed to the seat assigned to him in the waiting area.
- 3- Administration of the vaccine:
  - The beneficiary is called to the vaccination clinic
  - The beneficiary is vaccinated after making sure that there are no contraindications to vaccination, through a prepared list of questions
  - The beneficiary is asked to wait in the monitoring area
- 4- After receiving the vaccine
  - The beneficiary is notified about the expected side effects
  - After a 15-30 minutes waiting period, the beneficiary can leave the vaccination center
  - The beneficiary is asked to report any side effects to the center from which he/she received the vaccine or via the vaccination platform or Covid-19 vaccine hotline 1214.

#### 46- What is the role of the Lebanese media during this pandemic?

Disseminating information based on valid medical evidence, combatting fake news, contributing to raising awareness, highlighting success stories, and providing a platform for public debate on important public health issues.

#### **G- Special cases (pregnancy, breastfeeding, chronic diseases, etc.)**

#### 47- Is it safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women to receive the vaccine?

The WHO recommends offering the vaccine to a breastfeeding woman if she is one of the most at-risk groups (for example, being a member of healthcare staff). WHO also recommends mothers currently breastfeeding or expressing milk, and who are vaccinated, to **continue breastfeeding after vaccination as breastfeeding protects their infants.**

#### **48- Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe at all stages of pregnancy?**

The WHO recommends that all pregnant women should be vaccinated in consultation with their health care provider. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM), International Federation of Obstetrics and Gynecology (FIGO) and many others stated that the new mRNA vaccine for COVID-19 can be given to eligible pregnant and breastfeeding women who wish to be vaccinated. Pregnant women can consult with their caregivers about the science and vaccination standards for each country's priorities.

**The National taskforce committee of Coronavirus in Pregnancy NTCCP at the Ministry of Health recommends, in agreement with the National COVID-19 Vaccine Committee (NCC), that a pregnant woman receives the vaccine - if she so chooses - and after consulting with her health care provider.**

#### **49- Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for breastfeeding mothers?**

Breastfeeding has many benefits for breastfeeding mothers and babies. From a biological and clinical perspective, vaccines do not appear to affect the quantity, quality, or process of breastfeeding.

**The National taskforce committee of Coronavirus in Pregnancy NTCCP, in agreement with the National COVID-19 Vaccine Committee (NCC), recommends that breastfeeding mothers get the vaccine if they choose so- and after consulting with their healthcare provider.**

#### **50- Will COVID-19 vaccines affect fertility?**

So far, there is no evidence that the COVID-19 vaccine affects fertility.

#### **51- Can I get vaccinated if I am planning to become pregnant?**

Yes. Since the COVID-19 virus is high risk, especially for pregnant women, who are more likely to give birth to their children prematurely if infected, it is best to get vaccinated before becoming pregnant, depending on the priority of the group you belong to.

#### **52- If I suffer from allergies, is it safe to take the COVID-19 vaccine?**

You should not receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine if you had an anaphylactic shock after receiving a previous dose of this vaccine, or you have a severe allergic reaction to any component of this vaccine.

**53- If I suffer from chronic non-communicable diseases (such as diabetes, cancer, chronic respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, etc.) is it safe to take the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Vaccination is recommended for people with diseases identified as increasing the risk of severe COVID-19 contraction, including obesity, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, and diabetes.

**54- Can people with special needs take the COVID-19 vaccine?**

Yes, people with special needs can take the vaccine.

**H- Specific questions and additional information on COVID-19 Vaccinations for refugees and stateless persons.**

**55- Can I receive the vaccine if I am not Lebanese?**

Based on the national vaccination plan, all residents of Lebanon have the right to receive the vaccine, regardless of nationality, in order to reach community immunity and to limit the spread of the pandemic.

**56- What type of ID document can I use to register on the COVAX platform?**

Refugees and displaced can use one of the following documents to register on the COVID-19 Vaccination Platform:

- National ID (expired accepted), National passport (expired accepted), Special ID (Palestinians in Lebanon and non-IDs), or residency/work permit in Lebanon.
- UNHCR certificate (expired accepted), Individual Civil Extract, Family Booklet, Birth certificate of birth registered in Lebanon. **Please note that you cannot use a UNHCR barcode to register.**
- Summary of Residency, an Understudy Card issued by GSO, a Laissez-passer, or an Identification Card ((مستند تعريف) issued by a Mokhtar with a photo duly signed.
- Residence Certificate or a Membership ID.

During the COVID-19 vaccination, you must bring the same document that you used during the vaccination registration process.

**57- How can I get registered if I do not have any ID document and I am not registered with UNHCR?**

If you do not have any of the identification documents listed in Question 56, you can use the vaccination certificate from the Municipality in the area where you reside.

**58- Can I register to take the COVID-19 vaccine if I am stateless/have no nationality?**

Yes, you can still enroll if you have any of the following documents: a Laissez-passer, a summary of residency (khoulaset jawaz ikama), an understudy card issued by GSO, or an identification card (مستند تعريف) issued by Mokhtar with a photo duly signed.

**59- What if my UNHCR certificate and/or my personal ID/Passport dates are expired?**

The expiration of the mentioned documents/documents do not present any problem for registration on the vaccine platform.

**60- What if I do not have my own mobile phone?**

When you are signing up on the vaccination platform, you can use the mobile phone number of someone in your family or of a trusted person in your community. The same mobile phone number can be used for more than one person. Please make sure that you have regular access to this number so that you can receive messages about the vaccination.

**61- Will providing my personal data to the COVAX platform result in arrest or deportation, especially if I do not have valid legal residency in Lebanon?**

No, your personal data will only be needed and used for the purpose of vaccination. It is important to note that the COVAX platform has a privacy policy which is legally binding, and which governs data collection and use according to the national law 81/2018.