



# Covid-19 Vaccine Q&A



## What is a vaccine?

- Vaccines are used to **prevent diseases** that are caused by viruses like measles, mumps or chickenpox - and now Covid-19.
- A vaccine can be in the form of **drops** you swallow or an **injection**.
- A vaccine works by helping the body recognise infections or viruses, and **teaching the body how to fight an infection** it has never seen before.

## Why do we use vaccines?

- Vaccines help **prevent outbreaks** of diseases that can spread from person to person.
- Vaccines one part of what we can do to prevent or control pandemics of viral diseases.

**Vaccines prevent people from getting illnesses that can kill them or leave them with life-long illnesses or side-effects.**

In South Africa, **all children are vaccinated** - or inoculated or immunised - against several preventable diseases like mumps, polio, measles, meningitis, and cervical cancer.

We have **prevented many deaths** of children and adults because they have been vaccinated against life-threatening diseases.



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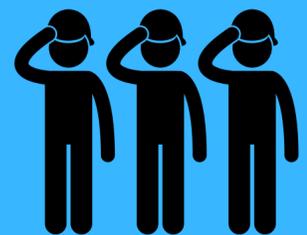
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## What is the immune system?

- The immune system is the body's way of **protecting itself**.
- The immune system contains cells that fight off infections or diseases like the body's **soldiers**.

When you get sick, you might get a temperature. This is the immune system's way of fighting the infection. The **immune system remembers the infection** so that next time you get it, **you can fight it off**.



In some people, the immune system is **weakened** - like the elderly, children, or people living with chronic illnesses.

Those of us with weakened immune systems **need extra help fighting off illnesses**.  
Vaccines help with this..





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## How do vaccines work? (Part 1)

If your body is exposed to an infection it does not recognise, your body may need help understanding how to fight it. This is where vaccines come in.

Vaccines are designed to **mimic a virus** and **train your body how to defeat it**. There are different ways to make vaccines, but they all work similarly in your body.

Many vaccines are made by **changing a small part of a contagious virus** to make it **inactive/dead**.

When it is put into the body in a vaccine, **it trains the body** how to fight a full infection.

The fragment of the virus in a vaccine cannot make you sick - it teaches your body how to defend itself.

Vaccines teach your immune system how to make special **antibodies** against a particular virus. Antibodies are small proteins that latch onto the virus so that your soldier cells can kill it.

Antibodies are like **spears or weapons** that the soldier cells in your immune system use to fight an infection.



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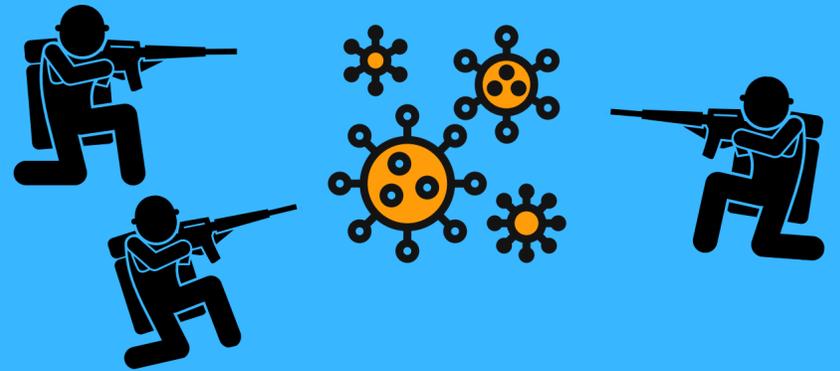
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To make you sick, viruses use the cells in your body to spread.

**How do vaccines work?  
(Part 2)**

If you are vaccinated against the specific virus, **your cells fight the infection off using the antibodies** they made when they encountered the vaccine.



By having antibodies that remember the virus, **your body will respond quickly** to attack the virus when you come into contact with it, and the virus will not spread in your cells. Then you will not get sick.

**Scientists test vaccines very carefully. Vaccines are only given to you when they are proven to be safe.**





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Is there a vaccine for Covid-19?

Some companies are developing vaccines against Covid-19. Some vaccines have already been proven to be **safe & effective**. They will be approved & rolled out in South Africa soon.

At December 2020, vaccines against Covid-19 **are not yet being distributed** in SA.

Who will get the Covid-19 vaccine?

There won't be enough vaccines for everyone at first. Government **is prioritising healthcare workers** to get the first doses. Other frontline workers, people with chronic health conditions, people living in crowded settings & the elderly will be targeted next.

Once priority groups are immunised, the rest of the population will be eligible for the vaccines.

**Access to vaccines is a human right** that everyone in South Africa is entitled to according to our Constitution.

Just because vaccines are becoming available, **it doesn't mean that Covid-19 is over**. We still need to **wear masks, wash hands & keep social distancing** - it will be many months before everyone is immunized.

There are a lot of fears & myths about vaccines. It is important that we understand how vaccines work. Vaccines are **safe & prevent you from getting sick**.



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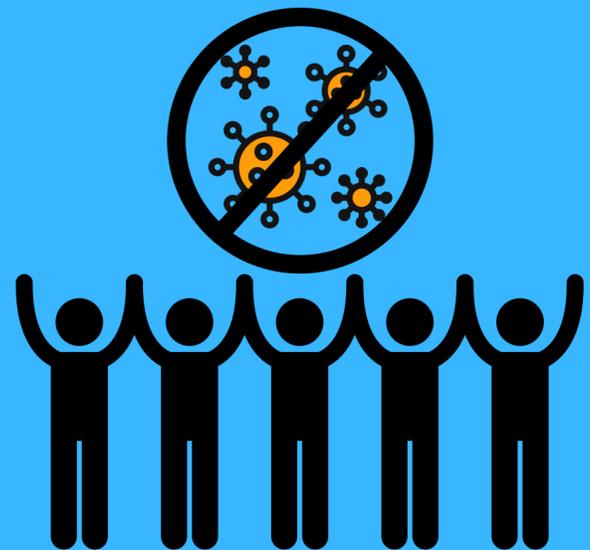


The virus can only spread if there are people in the population who are not immune to it. **You can become immune by getting vaccinated** – so getting vaccinated helps you and people around you.

If large numbers of people are immune, **the virus cannot spread** from person to person.

What is herd immunity or population immunity?

We call this 'herd immunity' or 'population immunity' - when there are enough people in a population who have antibodies against a virus so that the virus cannot spread anymore.



If enough people are immune to a virus, even people who haven't been vaccinated - like babies, or people with conditions that prevent them from being vaccinated - are safe.

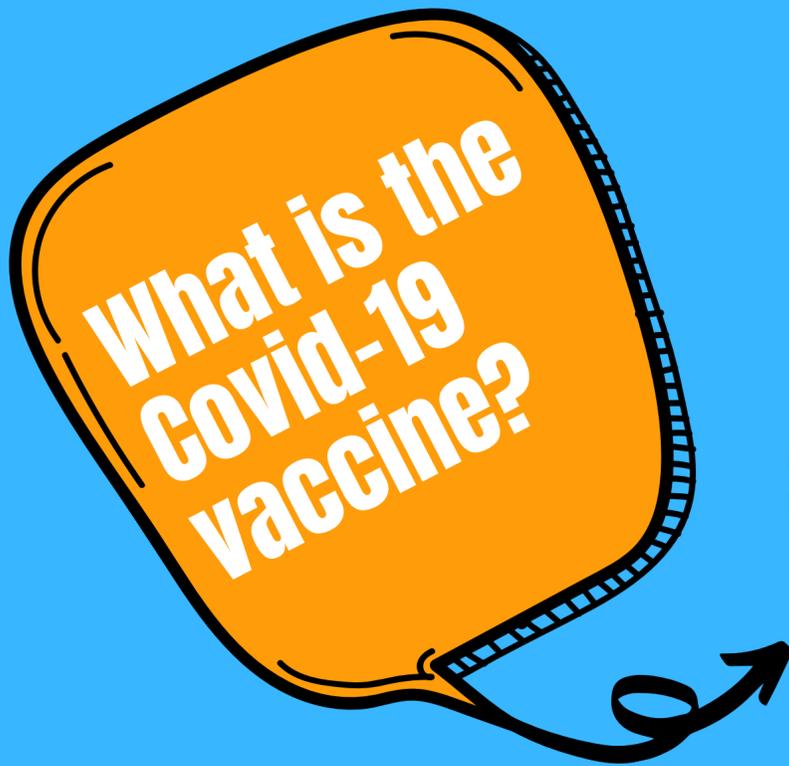
Scientists **have said that 67% of people in South Africa need to be immune** for us to achieve herd or population immunity.

When population immunity is achieved, the outbreak of the virus is **controlled**.





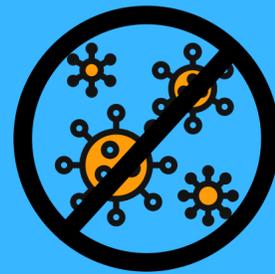
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Covid-19 is a **virus** and scientists around the world have been working hard to make a vaccine against it.

**Scientists test vaccines** carefully to make sure that **they are safe & that they work**. Only after this has been proven will vaccines be approved and given to people.

Some companies have finished testing their vaccines. Vaccine producers must have their testing results checked by **independent experts** in a process called "**peer review**".



**Oxford/AstraZeneca, Pfizer and Moderna** have all announced that **their vaccines prevent Covid-19** and have had their claims peer-reviewed.

There are other vaccines that have not yet been peer reviewed, including **Johnson & Johnson**, the **Sputnik V** vaccine from the Gamaleya Research Center in Russia, and **CoronaVac**, from a private Chinese company Sinovac.





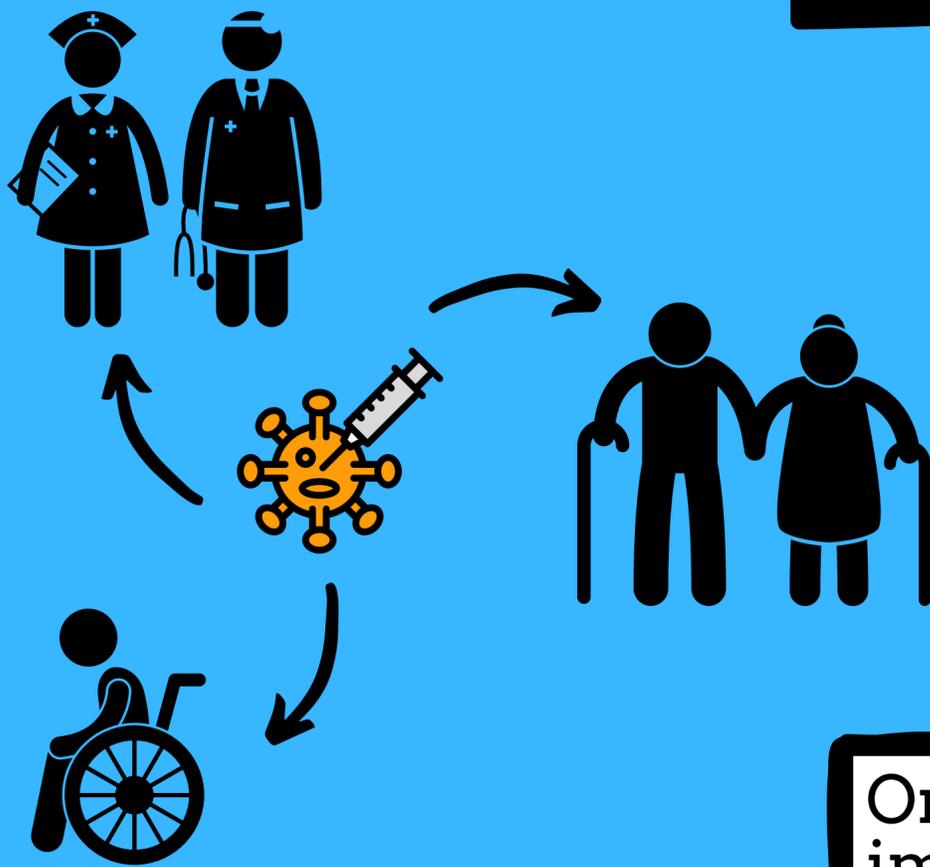
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## Who will get the Covid-19 vaccine? [Part 1]

There will not be enough vaccines for everyone at first.

On 7 January 2021, the Minister of Health announced that **1.5 million doses of the Oxford/Astra-Zeneca vaccine will be distributed to healthcare workers** in South Africa by the end of **February 2021**.



According to its current plan, government is prioritising:

- healthcare workers,
- people who live in confined settings like old age homes and prisons,
- people with chronic health conditions, and the elderly

to get the first doses of safe vaccines.

Once priority groups are immunised, **everyone in South Africa will be eligible for the vaccines.**

**Access to vaccines is a human right** that everyone in South Africa is entitled to according to our Constitution.

**Everyone will be entitled to get the vaccine for free.**



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# Covid-19 Vaccine Q&A



## Who will get the Covid-19 vaccine? [Part 2]

According to announcements made by the President and Department of Health in early January 2021, the current plan for vaccine rollout will work in three phases:

**Phase 1** → **Health care workers**  
1.25 million people

**Phase 2** → **Essential workers: 2.5 million people**  
**Persons in old age homes and prisons: 1.1 million people**  
**People over 60: 5 million people**  
**People over 18 with comorbidities: 8 million people**

**Phase 3** → **Other people over 18: 22 million**

**What can Community Healthcare Workers (CHWs) and health activists do?**

- CHWs can **share scientific, accurate knowledge** about vaccines with communities and **dispel myths and fake information.**
- CHWs can inform communities that **access to vaccines is a human right**, and build pressure for fair distribution of and access to vaccines around the country.
- CHWs can monitor to be sure there is no unfairness in who gets the vaccine.



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**Where and how will people get the vaccine?**

**According to the currently available information about South Africa's vaccine rollout plan, we will use the following spaces for vaccination drives:**

## Health facility vaccination



Suitable in rural settings for community access

## Work-based vaccination programmes



Suitable for essential workers, industries and departments

## Vaccination Centres



e.g. pharmacy practices, GPs and NGOs

## Outreach vaccination programmes



Suitable for congregated settings e.g. old age homes, prisons

