

Phase 2 of vaccine rollout set for 17 May

Health minister, Dr Zweli Mkhize, has announced that the second phase of the country's vaccination will begin on 17 May, as millions of doses of vaccine are set to land on South African shores over the next few weeks.



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The country has secured a combined 51-million jabs in the agreements that have been signed with various drug makers, to inoculate 42-million people.

- 31-million from Johnson & Johnson (J&J)
- 20-million from Pfizer
- 1.2-million vaccines from Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access, Covax.

"This means we can now move ahead with confidence as we finalise our plans for our mass rollout campaign. We said the second phase should take us six months and therefore, we're still sticking to that," he said, adding that it will be wrapped up in October.

Mkhize said government is still working hard to procure more jabs to ensure that those who may be unaccounted for or undocumented, are also immunised to reach herd immunity.

Healthcare workers

Meanwhile, he said, the final tranche of 200 000 J&J doses for the Sisonke Protocol is expected this weekend.

The protocol has enabled government to make the Covid-19 vaccine immediately available to healthcare workers using a research programme.

Mkhize reiterated that the protection of health workers against Covid-19 is paramount and vowed that government will continue to prioritise their lives.

"I want to say to our healthcare workers, we value you for the work you have done and thank you for your patience as we wait for all the vaccines to be available."

He assured all frontline workers that they will be vaccinated before the mass rollout and believes government will meet its target as more jabs are scheduled to arrive in the country.

Johnson & Johnson

The minister also announced that J&J has confirmed that South Africa will receive over 1.9-million doses, produced locally, this month.

"The advantage is that it has shortened the dispatch from the plant and the delivery to the vaccination centre," he said.

He added that 900,000 doses will be delivered in May, while another batch of 900,000 will follow in June.

AstraZeneca

He said South Africa has distributed the AstraZeneca vaccine to various African countries. In February, the country suspended the rollout of the procured 1.5-million AstraZeneca doses after studies showed that it is less effective against the mutated 501Y.V2, first discovered in the country.

Meanwhile, he said Treasury has confirmed that the Serum Institute of India has fully refunded South Africa for the remaining 500,000 doses of vaccines that have not yet been delivered.

"The money is already in our bank account... this closes the matter of the AstraZeneca vaccine and we close it without incurring fruitless expenditure," he said.