

FAQs on COVID -19 Vaccines-Version-01

1. What is vaccination?

It is a simple, safe and effective way of protecting people from harmful diseases by using your body's **natural defenses** to build resistance to specific infections and make your immune system stronger.

2. Why do we need a vaccine against COVID-19?

- Vaccination is important in preventing illness and disease.
- Sri Lanka has a long and very successful history of disease control and prevention with vaccination.
- COVID -19 preventive behaviors are extremely important, but disease control with behavior alone has been difficult to achieve.
- A vaccine together with preventive behaviors may be the only possible exit from this pandemic.

3. How are COVID -19 vaccines developed and tested?

Every vaccine must go through extensive and rigorous testing to ensure it is safe before it can be introduced in a country. An experimental vaccine needs to undergo animal testing, human pre-clinical testing, and population phase I, II, and III clinical trials before going to the market. During these phases the safety and effectiveness against the disease it is designed to protect against are assessed.

4. What is in the COVID -19 vaccine?

Most vaccines consist mainly of antigen, adjuvants, preservatives & stabilizers. In COVID -19 vaccine the antigen is a killed form of the virus which trains our bodies to recognize and fight against COVID -19 if we encounter it in the future.

5. How does the COVID -19 vaccine work?

The vaccine carries a non-living part of the virus (a protein found on the surface of the virus) which is used to build resistance to the virus, using our body's natural defenses.

- Strong immune responses and memory is developed by special immune cells named B and T cells.
- If the person is infected later on by the virus, these cells remember the virus and attack it, protecting the person from COVID-19.

6. Why is it important to get the COVID -19 vaccine?

- COVID -19 ;
 - Is highly infectious and spreads quickly
 - Can cause serious illness, hospitalization, long term complications and even death
- Getting your vaccine should protect you and may help protect your family and those around you.
- Being in good health does not reduce your risk of catching COVID -19 and passing it on.
- You can unknowingly infect your loved ones and those around you even if you have show no symptoms at all.

By getting vaccinated we are helping protect ourselves, society and being socially responsible

7. Is COVID -19 vaccine safe ?

As with all vaccines, COVID -19 vaccine also needs to meet rigorous criteria for safety and effectiveness. All vaccines go through rigorous studies to ensure they are safe before being approved for use.

- With COVID-19 becoming a global health emergency, scientists around the world were working very hard to get vaccines out as soon as possible.
- Vaccine safety was the most important factor in the process of vaccine development.
- Evaluations of different vaccines were done very fast.
- No short cuts have been taken.
- Proper clinical trials have been conducted.
- We are thus seeing vaccines developed with huge commitment, sufficient funds and a large team of capable individuals working to achieve a common goal

8. What are the possible side effects of COVID -19 vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccine as with all other vaccines in use, can have side effects. It may cause minor and temporary side effects, such as injection site pain, mild fever, muscle pain, headache and sometimes chills. More serious side- effects are possible, but very rare.

9. What should you mention to your health care provider before you get COVID 19 Vaccine?

Tell the healthcare provider about all of your medical conditions, including:

- If you have ever had a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) after taking any drug, any vaccine or any ingredients of a vaccine
- If you have fever
- If you have a bleeding disorder
- If you are immune compromised or are on a medicine that affects your immune system
- If you are pregnant
- If you are breastfeeding
- If you have received another COVID-19 vaccine

10. Who is not eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine?

Pregnant Mothers

- Breastfeeding Mothers
- Those below the age of 18 years
- Those with previous allergic reactions to vaccination (medical advice should be obtained regarding vaccination of such persons)
- Those allergic to any component of the vaccine
- Severe allergy/ anaphylaxis to other pharmaceutical product or food item (requiring hospitalization)
- If any allergic history, better to vaccinate in a hospital under medical care

11. Until I am able to get a vaccine what can I do now to help protect myself from getting COVID-19?

To protect yourself and others, follow these recommendations:

- Wear a mask over your nose and mouth
- Stay at least 1 meter away from others
- Avoid crowds
- Avoid poorly ventilated spaces
- Wash your hands often

12. I have more questions about the COVID-19 vaccine. How can I get reliable information?

When looking online for information about vaccines, be sure to consult only trustworthy sources. Use WHO, Epidemiology unit-Sri Lanka, Health Promotion Bureau web sites or call 1999 “Suwaseriya” hot line for more health information.