

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**To:** Editors & Health Journalists

**Issued by:**

have already been prioritised for vaccination by the South African Government's Covid-19 Vaccination Strategy.

**The JnJ vaccine has been shown to be safe, with no safety concerns reported from past trials or rollouts.** The ENSEMBLE trial showed excellent protection of a single-dose vaccine against severe COVID-19, including in South Africa, and as such a delay in rolling out the vaccine would be unethical.

**There is a clear process for vaccine rollout to healthcare workers.** To receive the vaccine, healthcare workers must: (1) register on the South Africa Electronic Vaccination Data System, (2) respond to an SMS invitation, and (3) provide informed consent to take part. Healthcare workers will receive a vaccination voucher and communication once a vaccination centre is open to render the service. To register, follow this link: <https://vaccine.enroll.health.gov.za/#/>

The Sisonke rollout will include meaningful collaboration between the original team who were involved in the ENSEMBLE trial, JnJ, and the NDoH and the SAMRC. The partners will closely monitor, track and assess the real-world rollout of the vaccine. They will measure: (1) the occurrence of hospitalizations and deaths, (2) the incidence of severe SARS CoV-2 infections, (3) the diversity of breakthrough infections; and (4) evaluate vaccine uptake among healthcare workers in South Africa.

This experienced team will utilise their trained and qualified staff including pharmacists, clinicians and others to receive, store and oversee the dispensation of the JnJ vaccine. Sisonke staff will work very closely with national and provincial health public and private vaccine centres to ensure that the vaccination of healthcare workers is done safely and carefully managed.

**The protection of our healthcare workers through the rollout of the safe and efficacious vaccine is an urgent priority for South Africa.**

#### **As a demonstration**

#### **MEDIA ENQUIRIES:**

Mr. Popo Maja  
Spokesperson  
National Department of Health  
Cell: 072 585 3219/082 373 1169  
E-mail: [Popo.maja@health.gov.za](mailto:Popo.maja@health.gov.za)

**END**



## How does the vaccine protect you against COVID-19?

The vaccine does not contain the coronavirus and will not give you COVID-19. People often develop some mild symptoms when they receive the vaccine. These are positive signs that the body is mounting an immune response to the coronavirus. The technical term for this is 'reactogenicity'. When you encounter real coronavirus particles in future, your immune system will be able to disarm the virus so that you either do not fall ill at all, or if you do, the symptoms are mild and your chances of being hospitalised or dying are much lower.

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## How is the JnJ vaccine stored?

The vaccine has a long shelf life of 2 years at -20 degrees Celsius and can be safely stored in a domestic fridge for 1 month. This makes it suitable for widespread rollout in warmer countries like South Africa as ultra-cold freezers are not needed.

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## How is the vaccine given and when does protection start?

The JnJ vaccine is given as a single dose into the upper arm. Protection starts around 10-14 days after vaccination, and even as early as 7 days for severe disease. Protection rises to good levels around a month after vaccination. The JnJ vaccine is the only COVID-19 vaccine currently available that only uses



## I have had a severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis to a medicine in the past and am worried. What should I do?

A small number of severe allergic reactions or anaphylaxis have been reported mainly in response to COVID-19 vaccines, but they are very rare, at approximately 2.5 cases per million doses of vaccine administered. No-one has died from anaphylaxis following administration of any COVID-19 vaccine.

If you have had a severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis to a medication or food in the past, please talk to your doctor before receiving the vaccine. If you have had a severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis to a medication or food in the past, please talk to your doctor before receiving the vaccine. If you have had a severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis to a medication or food in the past, please talk to your doctor before receiving the vaccine.

## Can I stop general COVID-19 protection measures once I have the vaccine?

Even though you will be protected from getting severely ill and dying, studies have not yet shown enough data to prove that vaccinated people cannot spread the virus to others. Thus it remains possible that a vaccinated person could spread the virus to others, even if they are not showing any symptoms.

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## Do I need the vaccine if I have already had COVID-19?

Yes, you should still be vaccinated if you have had COVID-19 previously or if you have a positive antibody test. So far, it has been found that the natural immunity you may gain from having COVID-19 does not last. The vaccine would boost your built-in immunity and will not harm you in any way.

## Can I have the vaccine if I have symptoms of COVID or am in quarantine or isolation?

Day quarantine period before receiving the vaccine. There is no data available to show that vaccination immediately post-exposure will prevent disease as it is unlikely that the vaccine would elicit an immune response quickly enough to protect you from developing COVID-19.

If you currently have COVID-19, you should wait until you have recovered from the initial COVID-19 illness and have completed your isolation period before getting vaccinated.