



UAE Approves Vaccine Booster Shots

The National Emergency Crisis and Disasters Management Authority (NCEMA) of the UAE has given two vaccine candidates the green light for emergency use as booster shots among certain segments of the population. The Russian vaccine Sputnik and the German-American vaccine Pfizer-BioNTech are the two candidates in question that have received approval.

The announcement was made at the government's weekly COVID-19 briefing earlier this month. According to the authorities, vulnerable individuals should seek a booster shot six months after their second dose of any coronavirus vaccine, given that the immunity provided by the initial doses is expected to decrease over time.

Who is eligible?

The third booster vaccine shot is not available to the entire Emirati populace. Instead, it is aimed at targeted groups of society who have been identified as particularly vulnerable to contracting and suffering bad symptoms of COVID-19. These include:

- All Emirati residents over the age of 60 years old
- All Emirati residents over the age of 50 years old who suffer from chronic diseases or are at risk of contracting them
- All Emirati residents over the age of 18 years old who receive long-term healthcare

There are some citizens who have already received a booster dose of Sputnik or BioNTech after having received two previous doses of Sinopharm vaccine. This latest update does not apply to them.

Following the science

The administration of a third booster dose to at-risk groups continues the UAE government's policy of following the science every step of the way. Early on, it was identified that rumours such as [COVID-19 being able to survive and transmit through water](#) were myths, with public information campaigns working to debunk them and raise public awareness about the real dangers of the disease.

This science-based approach has been supported by strict lockdown measures and a robust vaccination programme, with the UAE one of the first countries in the world to administer a vaccine to a citizen. For that reason, it has managed to keep its death



toll to a relatively modest 2,104 people at the time of writing, which is significantly lower than many of its regional and international peers.

Planning for the future

In related news, Abu Dhabi has sanctioned the introduction of the blue schools initiative. By grading each school depending on the percentage of students who have been inoculated against the virus, the emirate is able to dictate how quickly containment measures can be relaxed.

For example, there are currently four different tiers of grading. Schools with 85% or more of their pupils vaccinated are designated “blue”, with 65-84% labelled “green”, 50-64% named “yellow” and under 50% dubbed “orange”. Based upon these assignments, schools can then eliminate social distancing, relax the mandatory wearing of face masks, increased the capacity of school buses and classrooms and reintroduce extra-curricular activities, among other measures.