

COVISHIELD: HOW EFFECTIVE IS IT AGAINST NOVEL COVID-19? WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR

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India is all set to kick off the COVID-19 vaccination drive from tomorrow. Around 3 lakh healthcare and frontline workers will be inoculated on inaugural day, said V K Paul, member of Niti Aayog. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the nationwide [COVID-19 vaccine](#) drive via video conferencing at 10.30 am on Saturday.

India approved the emergency authorisation of two vaccines against novel coronavirus — Covaxin by Bharat Biotech and Covishield by Serum Institute of India. Earlier, Britain and Argentina had approved the emergency marker use of coronavirus vaccine developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca. Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine manufacturer by volume, joined hands with British-Swedish drugmaker to produce 1 billion doses of its COVID-19 vaccine. The local version of Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine will be known as Covishield.

How does this vaccine work?

The 'virus-vectored' vaccine uses a weakened version of a chimpanzee common coldvirus that encodes instructions for making proteins from the novel coronavirus to generate an immune response and prevent infection.

Compared to the vaccines by United States drugmakers Pfizer and Moderna, Covishield is "logistically feasible for distribution in the country's both urban and rural parts as it can be stored at two to eight degrees celsius."

On COVID-19 vaccine efficacy:

Two doses of the vaccine, four weeks apart, were originally thought to offer the best protection against COVID-19. The scientists revealed that the Oxford vaccine had an overall efficacy of 70%, but could be around 90% effective when administered as a half dose followed by a full dose a month later.

About 3,000 people were given the half dose and then a full dose four weeks later, with data showing 90% were protected. In the larger group, who were given two full doses also four weeks apart, efficacy was 62%. The led AstraZeneca to announce in November a new global trial of the vaccine with the half-dose/full-dose regime.

"Covishield is highly effective vaccine against novel coronavirus," Adar Poonawalla, chief executive officer, Serum Institute of India earlier mentioned. The company has made 50 million doses of the Oxford University-AstraZeneca vaccine.

Side-effects of Covishield vaccine

Side effects that have been reported with the Covishield vaccine include very Common (may affect more than 1 in 10 people); tenderness, pain, warmth, redness, itching, swelling or bruising where the injection is given; generally feeling unwell; feeling tired (fatigue); chills or feeling feverish; headache; feeling sick (nausea); joint pain or muscle ache; common (may affect up to 1 in 10 people); a lump at the injection sit; fever; being sick (vomiting); flu-like symptoms, such

as high temperature, sore throat, runny nose, cough and chills; uncommon (may affect up to 1 in 100 people); feeling dizzy; decreased appetite, abdominal pain; enlarged lymph nodes; excessive sweating; itchy skin or rash, Serum Institute of India mentioned.

Cost of Covishield

The central government on Monday ordered 11 million doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine from Serum Institute of India, the Pune-based pharmaceutical firm confirmed. The cost of the vaccine to the government would be 200 per vaccine dose for first 100 million doses, the drugmaker noted.

The vaccine will be sold on the private market at 1,000 rupees (\$13.68) per dose," Adar Poonawalla, chief executive officer, Serum Institute of India told in an interview with *the Associated Press*. However, the Indian government has not allowed any drugmaker to sell COVID-19 vaccines in the private market yet.

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