

PRESS RELEASE

The National Vaccination Plan for COVID-19 was presented

The Ministry of Health is in full readiness to be able to respond quickly, when conditions allow, and the time comes for the vaccination of the Cyprus population, Ms Olga Kalakouta, Deputy Director of Medical and Public Health Services said during a Press conference, presenting the plan prepared by the Ministry of Health which is already being implemented as part of the overall preparation.

Presentation of the [National Vaccination Plan for COVID-19](#)

Ms Kalakouta explained that the supply of vaccines, is done through a centralised procedure by the EU and is common to all member states, be they rich countries, less rich countries, countries with small populations or larger countries. “That is, we can obtain for our population the vaccines we need to meet our needs and this makes us feel particularly safe”, she said and added that “what has been achieved, through the agreements reached is very important, because it enables us to know, among other things, what the flow of vaccines will be; that means when the various quantities will be received as we will be able to know at the same time how many vaccines will be on the way to our country and we will plan accordingly”.

In order to prepare Cyprus for the necessary support equipment, Ms Kalakouta said that “through the agreements we also know how to store the vaccine of each of the six companies. For example, the first two vaccines need a storage process, one at -75 degrees and the other a little higher but still at low temperatures. To this end the necessary steps have been taken. It’s a fact that storage will be central. At the moment, there has been no change in the date of the delivery of the two huge refrigerators that we will need in order to ensure safe storage of vaccines, so we are in line with our plan”.

On the dates of the delivery of the first quantities, Ms Kalakouta presented relevant tables, stressing that “the first batch of the Pfiser-Biontech vaccine is expected in January, while it is estimated that for Moderna the evaluation will be done in mid-January, and we have to

wait a while. In the case of AstraZeneca an authorization has not been requested yet, therefore the initial date of delivery must be changed. It is very important to be on alert to change the dates according to developments and to be able to respond at any time. That is to say, to know the flow of quantities each month and to adapt accordingly”.

The delivery of vaccines, the monitoring of the vaccination process and the monitoring of stocks will be done through “a software that enables us, even to monitor vaccines along the way from the storage room to the Vaccination Centre. In the full development of the process, it will be possible to operate 38 Vaccination Centres, one in each Primary Health Care Center. We are lucky because we have knowledge, the infrastructure and properly trained personnel”, she said.

In each vaccination center, Ms Kalakouta explained, “there will be a possibility to operate up to three vaccination units simultaneously”. Moreover, in cases where the space allows it, “we will prefer to operate more units than to operate more Vaccination Centres, as this will also bring savings on staff and equipment”. “At the same time, we are looking into some large venues where vaccinations could be carried out. The goal is not to have any vaccines stored. The only ones stored will be the second dose for each citizen who is vaccinated with the first dose, so that there is no risk if a delivery is delayed afterwards”, she noted.

According to the plan, “for people in hospitals who belong to the priority groups, our units will vaccinate them on the spot. Contacts have already contacted the State Health Services Organization and the Cyprus Nurses Association and they will help us, too, with their own staff. In addition, “we have mobile units, which will be used mainly in closed structures such as senior people’s homes that will be one of the first places where vaccinations will be take place”, she added.

“There is a possibility for up to 100 different units to operate simultaneously and as we estimate, under normal conditions one person will be able to be vaccinated every six minutes since vaccinations will start at 8 a.m. and continue until 6 or 7 p.m., depending on the demand,” Dr Kalakouta stressed.

The vaccination, she continued, “will only be done by personal appointment or if there are groups, we will know the numbers in advance so as to be prepared. An appointment can be

made through the software electronically by a person either for himself or for his father or mother or another person who does not use the Internet. The vaccination software will have three portals. The beneficiary portal, the 'portal' concerning Vaccination Centres and the 'data portal' that will operate at a central level" she added.

As soon as an appointment is scheduled electronically, "the person will receive a text message on his mobile phone and there will also be a possibility to send a reminder for both the first and the second dose of the vaccine. There will also be the possibility of issuing an electronic vaccination certificate, although at the beginning we will also use the traditional vaccination card known to us all. The software will also be able to allow or block the programming of an appointment. If, for example, at a set moment under our plan, people over the age of 80 are being vaccinated and someone who is 75 years old tries to make an appointment, then the system will block it", she explained.

Priority to vaccinations will be given to the people living and to those working in senior people's homes, which are around 5,000 people, so from now we know that we will need 10.000 doses and this issue is being dealt with", Ms Kalakouta said.

"Preparation has also been done for the different age groups, and for example we know that we have around 33.000 people over the age of 80, another 33.000 over 70 and so we are now planning ahead. Wide vaccination is expected to start in the summer taking into account the information available we have so far on the flow of quantities arriving in Cyprus. We depend on what we have been told when signing the agreements", she said.

Replying to a question on to whether vaccination for the coronavirus will be carried out once or if a repeated vaccination will be needed every year, the Associate Professor in the Pharmaceutical Program of the University of Nicosia, Mr Christos Petrou, explained that "we cannot yet know this. I can only tell you that the first volunteers were vaccinated in early summer, so that's something we'll know in a year. What we now know is that vaccines protect against this serious disease, so we aim to reduce hospitalizations along with deaths".

From the clinical study, Mr Petrou added, "there are no reliable data on people who have already been infected with the virus and are subsequently vaccinated. But surely, especially

for asymptomatic individuals, the vaccine will provide greater protection than the infection itself”.

“Each vaccine will have its own characteristics. Some are tested on specific population groups, age or other characteristics. Once the vaccines come in very small quantities, we won't have a choice, provided we have knowledge of their safety. Some may be recommended for a certain category of the population; some may not be recommended. Any vaccines approved will be approved on the same basis of efficiency and safety criteria”, said Mr Petrou.

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