



**World Health
Organization**

COVID-19 Vaccines: A Briefing for Journalists

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Today's Objectives

This briefing will:

- Summarize expected plans for COVID-19 vaccine roll-out in the African Region, including:
 - Vaccine information
 - Prioritised populations
 - Timing and delivery strategies
- Provide guidance on professional and high-quality reporting on COVID-19 vaccines
- Share accurate information and helpful resources on the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccines

The Importance of COVID-19 Vaccines & High-Quality Reporting

- Safe, effective, and quality vaccines for COVID-19 are our best hope for bringing the pandemic under control, together with other public health interventions, such as physical distancing and mask use.
- Journalists play a vital role in informing the public on science and important advances that can benefit the health of their communities.
- With several COVID-19 vaccines starting to be introduced, and many more in development, high-quality, timely reporting has never been more important.

COVID-19 Vaccine Development, Approval & Safety Monitoring



There are many strict protections, including strong safety monitoring processes, in place to help ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective:

- COVID-19 vaccines have been evaluated through a rigorous, multi-stage testing process, including studies that:
 - Involved tens of thousands of people
 - Included people at high risk of serious illness from COVID-19
 - Were designed to identify side effects or other safety concerns
- Rapid development of COVID-19 vaccines was possible due to unprecedented financial investments and scientific collaborations, which are changing how vaccines are developed. To accelerate the development process, some steps in the research and development process happened in parallel, while still maintaining strict clinical and safety standards.
- As COVID-19 vaccines are introduced in Africa, close monitoring will take place to detect any unexpected adverse side effects. This information will help us continue to assess how best to use these vaccines for the greatest protective impact.

Making the Decision about COVID-19 Vaccines

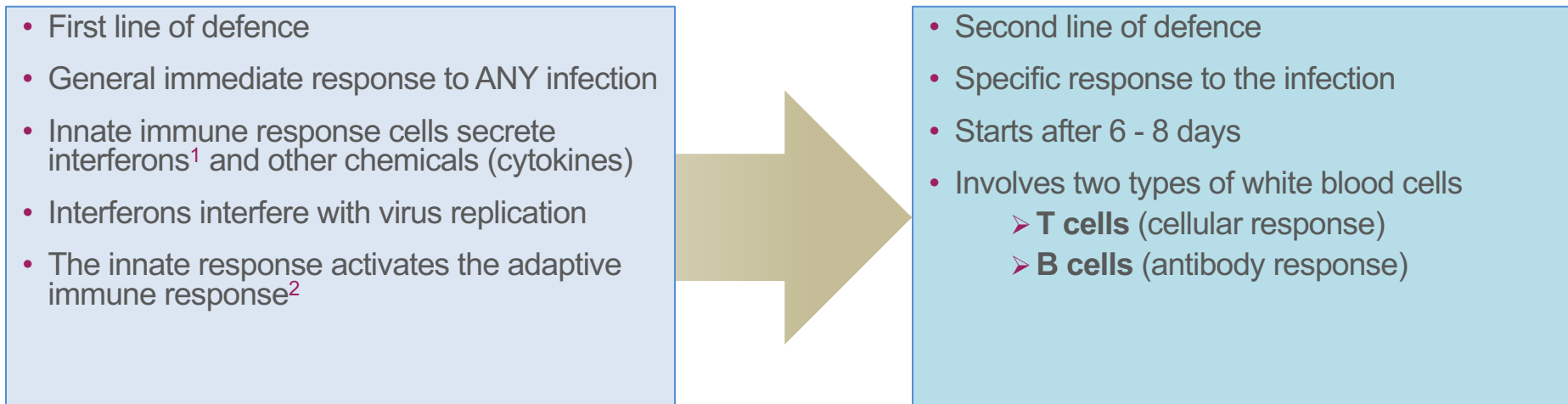


After clinical trials show that a COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective:

- It must be approved by the national regulatory authorities (NRA), or the NRA may rely on WHO's pre-qualification or emergency use listing process for approval, before it is introduced.
- The National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) will review efficacy and safety data to determine recommended national policies and priority populations.

Immune response to viral infections

- The immune system is the body's natural ability to defend against pathogens (eg. viruses, bacteria) and resist infections
- Two types of immunity are:
 - **innate immunity** and
 - **adaptive immunity**

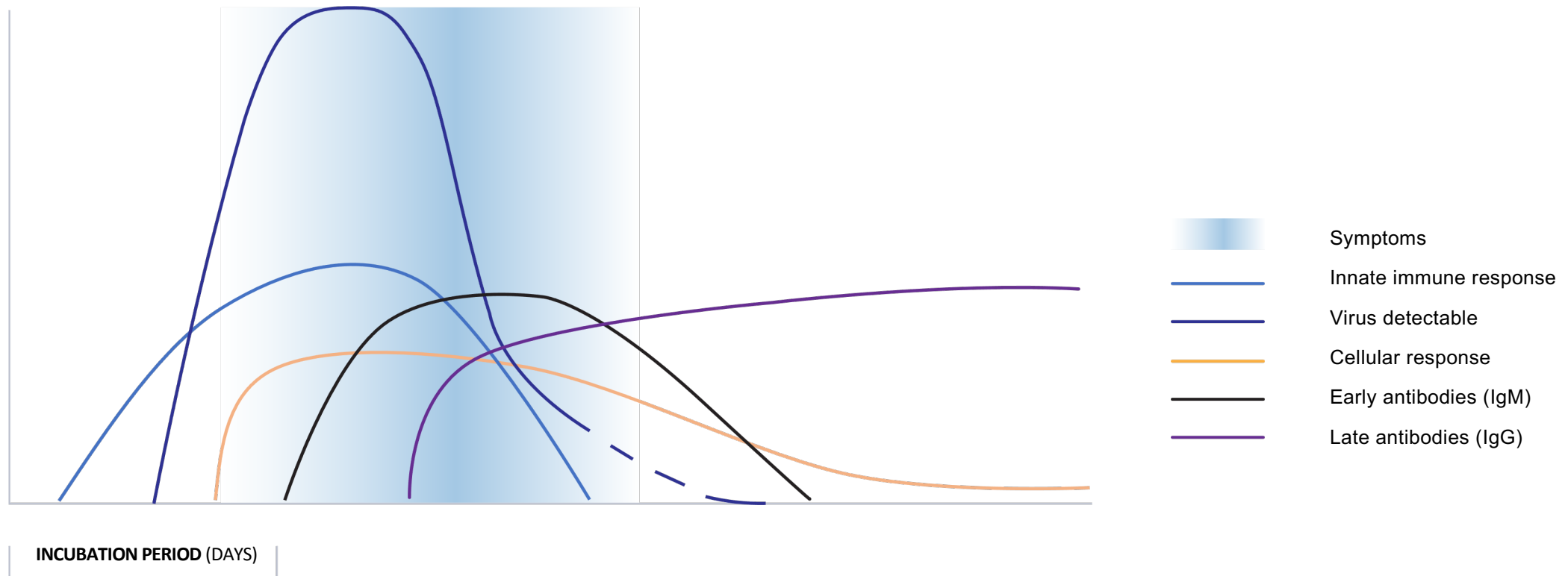


¹ Interferons and cytokines cause fever, muscle aches, etc – the typical early symptoms of infection

² A 'weaker' innate response (e.g. in elderly people or those with underlying health problems) may result in delayed stimulation of the adaptive response

Immune response to viral infections

The innate immune response is immediate, whereas the cellular and antibody response usually starts after 6 to 8 days



What We are Doing to Prepare for COVID-19 Vaccines

We are supporting countries to take many important steps to set up quality systems for the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines, including:

Developing a national plan
to guide the introduction of COVID-19 vaccines

Preparing for regulatory review
of COVID-19 vaccines,
in order to facilitate timely access

Training health workers
to safely and effectively provide vaccinations

Preparing our supply chain
and infrastructure for COVID-19 vaccine transport and delivery

Promoting vaccines through education
and collaboration with local communities

Providing public health guidance,
such as what people should do if they experience an adverse event after receiving a vaccine

Creating monitoring systems
to track adverse events linked to COVID-19 vaccines

What We Do and Don't Know About COVID-19 Vaccines



WHAT WE KNOW

- Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is an important new way to protect yourself against possible long-term illness and death from the virus.
- COVID-19 vaccines will cause some side effects. Most of these will be mild, temporary and will not require medical attention.
- There are multiple safe and effective vaccines.
- Different vaccines may be available in different places throughout this country and around the world.

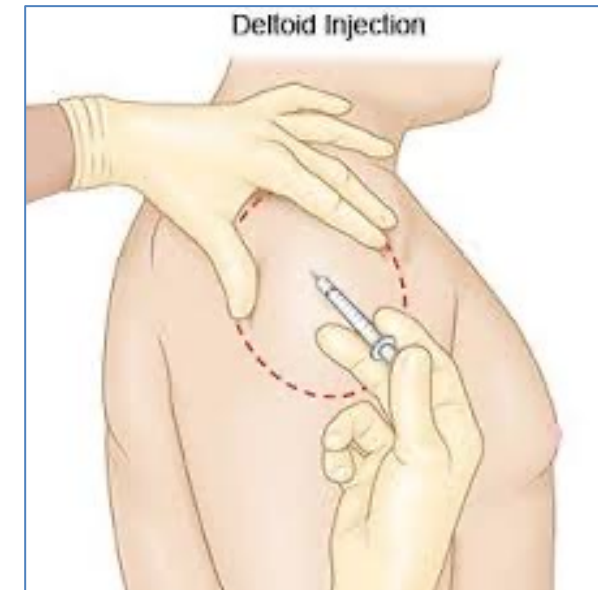
WHAT WE DON'T YET KNOW

- Whether people who get vaccinated for COVID-19 will be less likely to pass on the virus to other people. Scientists are still studying this.
- How long protection against COVID-19 will last.
- How COVID-19 variants could affect existing vaccines. Scientists are still studying this.
- How quickly COVID-19 vaccines could help bring the pandemic under control.

We will continue to work with vaccine manufacturers, scientists, health workers, WHO and others to collect data, conduct ongoing monitoring, and answer these and other questions about COVID-19 vaccines.

Safe delivery of COVID-19 vaccines and AEFI monitoring

Site and technique of Intra-muscular vaccine administration



- Clean visibly dirty skin with water/alcohol solution prior to injection in accordance with local policies.
- Inject vaccine slowly to **densest portion of muscle at 90 degrees angle**.
- Make sure to avoid the shoulder joint

ADVERSE EVENT FOLLOWING IMMUNIZATION (AEFI)



- An AEFI is any untoward medical occurrence following immunization
- does not necessarily have a causal relationship with vaccine usage;
- may be an unfavorable symptom about which a vaccine recipient complains;
- may be abnormal laboratory finding, sign or disease found by medical staff

Known minor AEFIs with COVID-19 vaccines

- Pain/ soreness at injection site
- Head ache
- Fatigue
- Muscle pain
- Joint pain
- Fever, chills
- Nausea

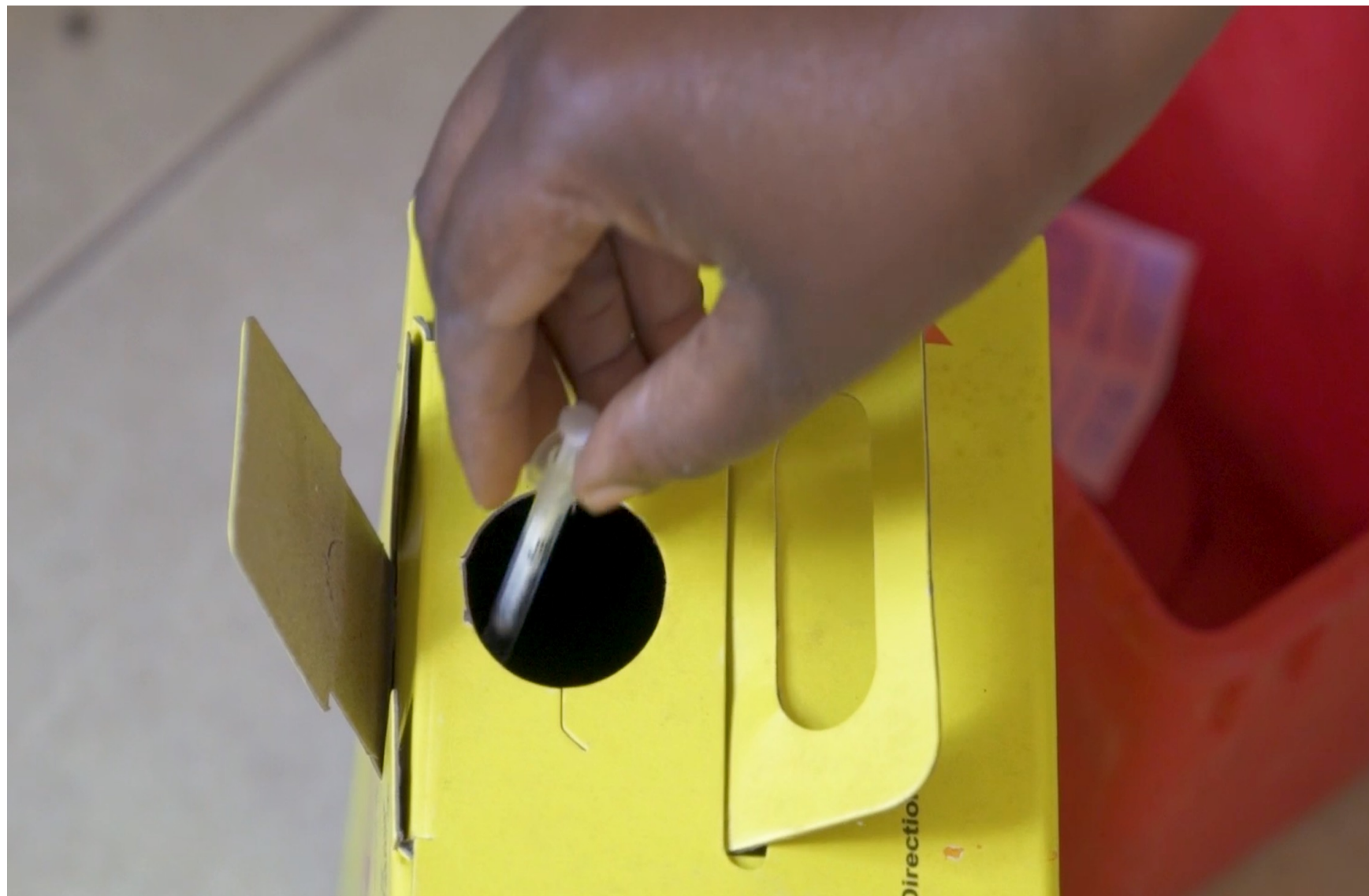
Possible causes of AEFIs

- | | |
|----|---|
| 01 | Vaccine product-related reaction:
caused or precipitated by a vaccine due to one or more of the inherent properties of the vaccine product |
| 02 | Vaccine quality defect-related reaction:
caused or precipitated by a vaccine that is due to one or more quality defects of the vaccine product, including its administration device as provided by the manufacturer |
| 03 | Immunization error-related reaction:
caused by inappropriate vaccine handling, prescribing or administration |
| 04 | Immunization anxiety-related reaction:
arising from anxiety about the immunization and fear of injection |
| 05 | Coincidental event:
event that happens after vaccination but is not caused by vaccine or vaccination process |

Vaccine handling to avoid errors leading to AEFIs



- Do not store and/or pack other diluents or medications together with the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Follow manufacturer's recommendations on storage, vaccine preparation, route and technique of administration, and contraindications and precautions.
- Draw the AD syringe just before vaccination. Do not pre-fill syringes
- Do not touch the needle or the rubber cap of the vaccine vial.
- Do not cover the vaccine carrier with the lid while the vial is in the foam pad.
- Discard the vaccine if it has been 6 hours at room temperature, since it was opened or at the end of the session, whichever comes first.



AEFI Surveillance of COVID-19 vaccination



- Document the following information accurately
- **Details on the vaccine:** the type (brand) of vaccine, name of the manufacturer, dose number, diluents used (if applicable), the batch numbers, expiry date
- **Details pertaining to the vaccine recipient** including address and contact details
- **Details pertaining to the health worker** reporting the AEFI
- Data on the **event and clinical features**
- An AEFI investigation should be then conducted by the appropriate local authority.

Communication and social mobilisation

Communication and social mobilisation



- When a new vaccine is introduced, there will likely be **public concerns regarding the safety and possible side-effects of the vaccine**
 - Fuelled by **mis-information and mis-understanding**
- **Effective early community engagement** and consultation (in the planning stage) will help reduce hesitancy.
 - **Listen and understand** community concerns and questions
 - Ask people **what they already know, and what they want to know**
 - Provide **clear information in local languages**; Messages and practical advice adapted to the context
 - Involve local institutions and community organisations
- **Manage expectations-** Explain that the vaccine is not going to be available to everyone in the early stages and people should continue to follow proven protective behaviours.

Tracking and addressing vaccine hesitancy

- Conduct regular **social listening** (pro-actively monitoring various sources of information) to understand community perceptions:
 - from social media, mainstream media, and community feedback
- Use the findings to craft effective messages to address the mis-conceptions and misinformation



Crisis communication planning

- To ensure that countries are well prepared **to respond fast and in a coordinated manner to any rumors and AEFI** related to COVID-19 vaccination.
- A core team should be set up to coordinate and manage crisis communication to ensure :
 - **Dissemination of key messages**
 - immunization programme and stakeholders **speak with one voice during a crisis**
 - Training of **spokespersons to handle crisis communication**
 - **Communicating properly** with affected population and other target audiences in case of serious AEFIs

Some Frequently Asked Questions on COVID-19 Vaccines

- How does the vaccine work ?
- Can the vaccine cause COVID-19 infection?
- What is the efficacy of AZD1222 vaccine or other vaccines?
- Are these vaccines made specifically for African countries?
- Is the AZD1222 useful in countries with COVID-19 virus variants?
- Do these vaccines alter our DNA?
- Do I still need to wear a facemask after vaccination?
- Is it safe to get a COVID-19 vaccination if I have an underlying medical condition?
- Is one vaccine preferable to the other for specific individuals?
- Others you may have heard in your communities.....





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Professional Reporting on COVID-19 Vaccines

The following slides contain useful guidance and select online resources that can help support journalists to develop high-quality reporting on COVID-19 vaccines.



Principles for Reporting on COVID-19 Vaccines



1. Reinforce vaccination norms

- Consider how your reporting can help to encourage trust in safe and effective vaccines and reinforce vaccination norms

2. Remind people of the benefits of vaccines

- Emphasize that COVID-19 vaccines can prevent long-term illness and death from the virus
- Inform audiences about the importance of all vaccines

3. Use clear, audience-friendly language

- Frame scientific language through explanations with simplified terms for audiences of all levels
- Avoid jargon and define scientific terms in every article, or link to a glossary of terms to allow readers to educate themselves

4. Responsibly disclose the potential side effects of COVID-19 vaccines

- Clearly state possible and expected side effects to inform the public, ease their reservations, and help them understand what to expect
- Understand that mild allergic reactions are to be expected with vaccines and should not be considered evidence that vaccines are unsafe. Extensive media coverage of individual allergic reactions could create unwarranted public alarm.

5. Address vaccine hesitancy

- Highlight the rigorous review process involved in COVID-19 vaccines and provide trustworthy information using expert and scientific sources
- Report facts and figures about the role of effective vaccines in ending health epidemics throughout history

Reporting on COVID-19 Vaccine Trials & Data



1. Always read the full study or report before covering it

- Whenever possible, do not rely solely on press releases for data
- Request the raw data where possible, and include the details of the research methods in your reporting

2. Use trusted and reliable sources

- Use only expert or knowledgeable sources to inform stories
- Consult national science media centre for information and expert opinion

3. State the source

- Name information sources to show credibility and allow readers to search for more information on the topic

Reporting on COVID-19 Vaccine Trials & Data



4. Provide the data

- Specify details such as the size of the trial and the time period
- Communicate the stage of the research – for example, whether data are preliminary or have been peer-reviewed
- Specify the demographics of the trial participants

5. Appropriately communicate uncertainty

- Share only the evidence, facts, and data currently available
- Do not overstate the information currently known

Choosing the Right Visuals for a Story

Appropriate photographs, illustrations, and other visuals can help educate the public about the benefits of vaccines and reinforce that vaccines are not something to fear.

DO

- Show a range of diverse people working on, administering, and receiving vaccines



DON'T

- Include images of crying babies, anxious-looking patients or oversized needles



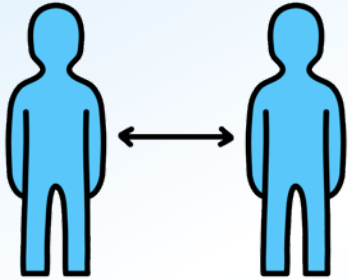
Additional Information & Resources



- [WHO's COVID-19 vaccines page](#) – WHO news and resources, explainers on key topics, and answers to frequently asked questions
- [Journalism in a Pandemic: Covering COVID-19 Now and in the Future](#) – A free, self-directed online course produced by the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas in collaboration with WHO, UNESCO, and UNDP; it includes a module on COVID-19 treatment and vaccine issues
- [COVID-19, An Informative Guide: Advice for Journalists](#) – A resource from the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO)
- [WHO situation reports](#) – Regular WHO updates on COVID-19 data and the global response

COVID-19 protective measures

Protect yourself & others



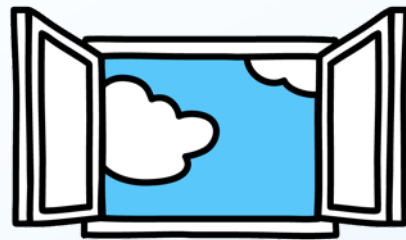
Keep your distance



Wash your hands frequently



Cough & sneeze into your elbow



Ventilate or open windows



Wear a mask