Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

COVID-19 vaccines do not cause infertility

Most people do not face any side-effect after COVID vaccination but it does not mean that vaccines are not efficient

“At least six different types of COVID-19 vaccine to be available in India soon, we expect to procure 30-35 crore doses in a month, will enable to vaccinate 1 crore persons in a day”

Common Questions on COVID-19 Vaccination answered by Dr. N.K. Arora, Chairman, Working Group on COVID-19 in NTAGI

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We are soon going to have the world’s first DNA-plasmid vaccine by Zydus Cadilla which has been Made in India. The other vaccine that we can expect soon is Biological E – a protein sub-unit vaccine, informs Dr. Narendra Kumar Arora, Chairman of COVID-19 Working Group of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI). He further informs that the trials of these vaccines have been quite encouraging. “We are hopeful that this vaccine will be available by September. The Indian m-RNA vaccine which can be stored at temperature 2 - 8 Degree Celsius should also be available by September. Two other vaccines namely Novavax by Serum Institute of India and Johnson & Johnson may also be expected soon. By the third week of July, the production capacity of Bharat Biotech and SII are going to be increased phenomenally. This will enhance the vaccine supply in the country. By August, we expect to procure 30-35 crore doses in a month”. Dr. Arora says that this will enable us to vaccinate one crore persons in a day.

The Chairperson spoke on these and various other facets of India’s COVID-19 vaccination drive, in an interview to Department of Science and Technology’s OTT - India Science Channel.

How effective are the new vaccines going to be?

When we say a certain vaccine is 80% effective, it means that vaccine reduces the chances of COVID-19 disease by 80%. There is a difference between infection and disease. If a person has contracted COVID infection but is asymptomatic, this person only has an infection. However, if the

person has symptoms due to the infection, this person has COVID disease. All vaccines in the world prevent COVID disease. There is very little chance of severe disease after vaccination while the chances of death after vaccination are negligible. If the efficacy of a vaccine is 80%, then 20% of the vaccinated people may contract mild COVID.

The vaccines available in India are capable of reducing the spread of the Corona Virus. If 60%-70% people are vaccinated, the spread of the virus be checked.

The Government started the COVID immunization drive by vaccinating the elderly, in order to vaccinate the most vulnerable population first and thus reduce casualty and the burden on our health services.

There is a lot of mis-information regarding the COVID vaccine. Could you please clarify?

Recently, I travelled to Haryana and Uttar Pradesh and spoke to people in both urban and rural areas in these states to understand issues of vaccine hesitancy. Many people mostly from rural areas do not take COVID seriously and confuse it with normal fever. People need to understand that COVID may be mild in many cases. But when it takes a severe form, it may become a financial burden and may also lead to loss of life.

It is very encouraging that we can protect ourselves from COVID through vaccination. We must all firmly believe that COVID-19 vaccines available in India are completely safe. I assure every one that all the vaccines have undergone rigorous tests, including clinical trials that are globally recognized.

As far as side-effects are concerned, all vaccines have mild side-effects. This includes mild fever, fatigue, pain in the injection site, etc. for a day or two. It does not cause any serious side-effects.

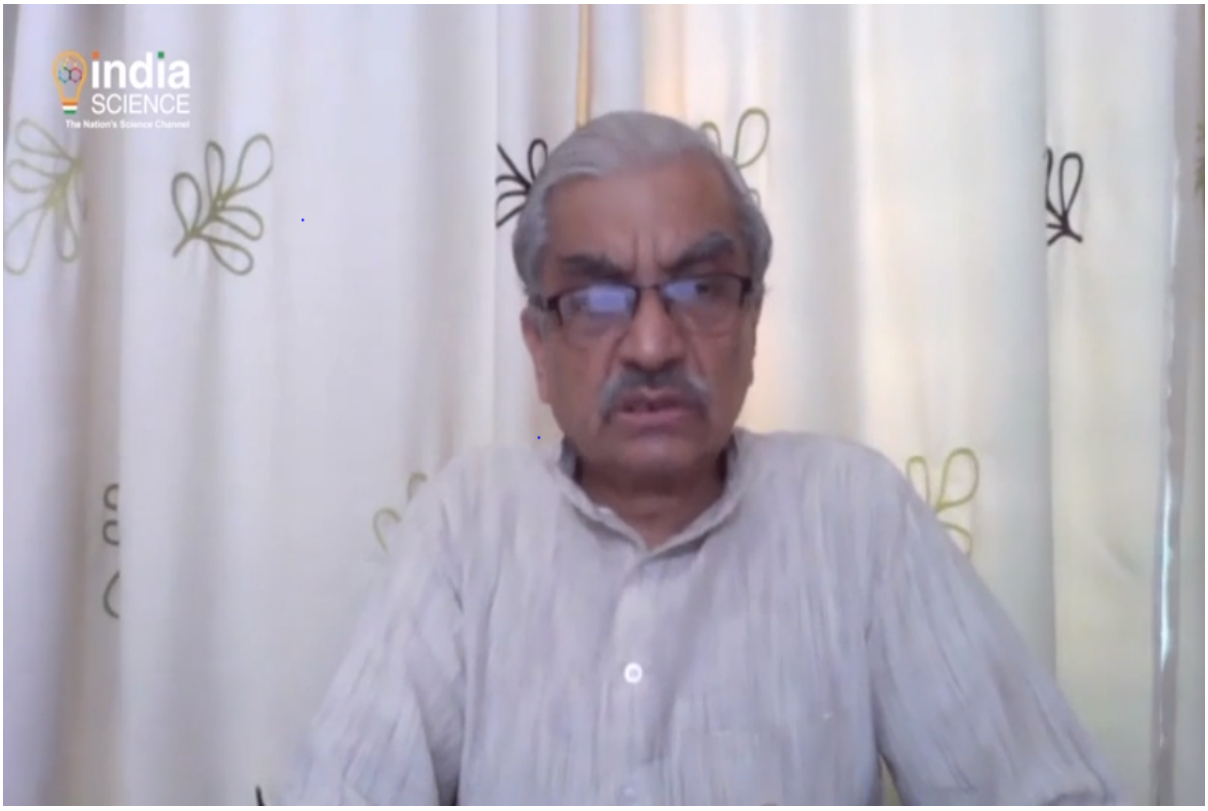
When children get their regular vaccines, even they show certain side-effects like fever, swelling etc. The elders in the family know that the vaccine is good for the child despite side-effects. Similarly, it is time for the elders to understand that the COVID vaccine is important for our family and our society. Hence, mild side- effects should not deter us.

There are rumours that if a person does not experience fever after getting vaccinated, then the vaccination is not working. How true is that?

Most people do not face any side-effect after COVID vaccination but it does not mean that vaccines are not efficient. Only 20% - 30% people are going to experience fever after vaccination. Some people may get fever after first dose and not have any fever after second dose and vice-versa. It varies from person to person and it is highly unpredictable.

Some cases have been reported where people got the COVID-19 infection after taking both the vaccines. So, some people are questioning the effectiveness of the vaccines.

Infection may occur even after taking both the doses of vaccine. But, in such cases, the disease will certainly be mild and the chances of a serious illness practically become nil. Further, just to avoid such an occurrence, people are being told to follow COVID Appropriate Behaviour also after vaccination. People can transmit the virus, which means that the virus may pass through you to family members and others. Had the vaccination of people aged above 45 years not been done, then death rates and burden on hospitals would have been unimaginable. Now, that the second wave is on the downslide, credit for it goes to vaccination.



Till when do antibodies last in the body? Do we need to take a booster dose after some time?

After vaccination, the immunity that has been developed can obviously be ascertained by the development of antibodies which can be visible and be measured. Apart from this, an invisible immunity is also developed. It is known as T-Cells which possess memory power. Henceforth whenever this virus will try to enter, the entire body becomes alert and starts to act against it. Thus, having antibody is not the only sign of our body's immunity power. Hence, there is no need to do antibody tests after vaccination, get worried and lose sleep over it.

Secondly, COVID-19 is a new disease which surfaced just one and a half years ago and it has just been 6 months since when vaccines are being given. But it seems that, like all other vaccines, immunity will last for at least six months to a year. With the passage of time, our understanding of

COVID-19 will improve. Moreover, certain factors like T-Cells cannot be measured. It has to be seen as to till how long after vaccination people can be saved from serious illness and mortality. But, for now, all vaccinated individuals will remain safe for six months to a year.

Once we have taken a particular company's vaccine, do we have to repeat that particular vaccine only? If we have to take booster doses in the future, then also, should we have the same company's vaccine?

Instead of companies, let us talk about the platforms. It never has happened before in human history that different processes and platforms have been used to develop vaccines for the same disease. Since the manufacturing processes are different for these vaccines, their effect on body will also not be the same. The process of taking different types of vaccine in two doses, or again a different vaccine later in a booster dose (if required), is called interchangeability. Whether this can be done is an important scientific question. Steps are being taken to find an answer to it. We are one of those rare countries where different types of COVID-19 vaccines are being given. This sort of interchangeability can be accepted or recognized only for three reasons: 1) It increases or betters immune power, 2) It eases the program of vaccine delivery; 3) Safety is ensured. But this interchangeability should not be propelled by the reason of scarcity of vaccines as vaccination is purely a scientific phenomenon.

Research on mix and match of vaccines is being carried out in some foreign countries. Is India also doing any such research?

This sort of research is necessary and efforts are being taken to start a few such researches in India soon. It may be started within a few weeks.

Are studies being carried out on vaccination of children? By when can we expect to have a vaccine for children?

Covaxin trials have been started on children aged between 2 – 18 years. Trials on children are being done in many centres across the country. We should be getting the results by September to October this year. Children may catch the infection, but they do not get seriously ill. However, children may become a transmitter for the virus. Hence, children also should be vaccinated.

Q) Do vaccines cause infertility?

When the polio vaccine came and was being administered in India and other parts of the world, this sort of a rumour had spread at that time too. At that time, a misinformation was created that children who are getting polio vaccine may face infertility in the future. This sort of wrong information is spread by the anti-vaccine lobby. We should know that all vaccines go through intense scientific researches. None of the vaccines have this sort of a side-effect. I would like to fully assure everyone that this sort of propaganda only misguides people. Our main intention is to save ourselves, family and society from corona virus. So, everyone must come forward and get vaccinated.

Watch the full interview at this link: https://www.indiascience.in/videos/corona-ko-harana-hai-vaccination-special-with-dr-n-dot-k-arora-chairman-covid-19-working-group-of-ntagi-g

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