

First 1-million Covid-19 vaccine doses will arrive this month

South Africa will take delivery of its first million doses of Covid-19 vaccine this month and an additional 500,000 in February from the Serum Institute of India (SII) through its affiliation with the [Covax facility](#), health minister, Dr Zweli Mkhize said on Thursday.



[123rf.com](#)

He was briefing Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Health, following calls from opposition parties for a National Assembly debate on South Africa's Covid-19 vaccine rollout plan. The government has come under fire for being vague on the details of its vaccine programme and being slow in implementing it.

“ [@Newzroom405](#) we have spoken to Serum Institute, our president has also spoken to the prime minister of India. We have our agreement and will receive the vaccines. There is no issue on our end.— Dr Zweli Mkhize ([@DrZweliMkhize](#)) [January 8, 2021](#) ”

Mkhize said teams from the National Department of Health and the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (Sahpra) were fine-tuning and aligning all the regulations processes to ensure that there are no unnecessary delays or regulatory impediments to activate the roll-out.

“We are happy that the SII/Astra Zeneca vaccine has already been approved by various regulators and is being rolled out in other countries,” he said.

The first phase of the rollout will target frontline healthcare workers.

“ [@MorningLiveSABC](#) the estimation takes us to about 1,5 million. It is a whole package; public and private sectors, doctors, nurses, general workers, security etc. It is across the spectrum that will be vaccinated.— Dr Zweli Mkhize ([@DrZweliMkhize](#)) [January 8, 2021](#) ”

Phase two will cover essential service workers, persons over the age of 60 and those 18 years or older with comorbidities. The third phase will target those that are older than 18 years.

Collaborating with medical schemes

While the fiscus will carry the burden of procuring the Covid-19 vaccine, government will reach out to medical schemes to make a contribution. They will also consider asking medical schemes to co-subsidise some members of the public, as government makes a push to raise funds to procure vaccine doses as early as next month, Mkhize said.

“I think as we stand at the moment, a few points that I think are important to mention are that, for one, we have had lots of discussions with the minister of finance [Tito Mboweni] basically to say that the fiscus is going to carry the major burden of procuring the vaccine.

“We have also agreed that we will look to activate other means of raising additional funds, and that the second way would be to approach the medical schemes and ask them to make a contribution, which will also be on the basis of social solidarity, wherein they could also co-subsidise some of the members of the public.

“The third one is to get business donors to make their own contributions,” he said.

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