



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

PRESS STATEMENT

THE COVID-19 SITUATION UPDATE AND ADJUSTMENTS ON TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS IN UGANDA

27th April 2022

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Muhesi'.



27th April 2022- The Ministry of Health would like to update the public on the current COVID-19 situation and the new measures that the country is undertaking in light of the evolving situation of the pandemic.

Allow me to congratulate all Ugandans, our health workers and pay a special tribute to H.E the President whose able leadership has allowed us to respond effectively to this pandemic.

It's now over two years since Uganda put up a spirited fight against the COVID-19 outbreak; in a response characterized by several achievements as well as challenges. At the turn of one year, the COVID-19 vaccination was successfully added to the menu of responses in a bid to control the disease across the country.

OVERVIEW OF COVID-19 IN UGANDA

To-date, the country has registered **164,118** confirmed cases of COVID-19 and **3,596** deaths. Furthermore, there is a massive drop in the number of admissions at the health facilities. Currently, there are two severely ill COVID-19 patients on admission at Mulago National Referral Hospital, and St. Mary's Hospital, Lacor. It is important to note that both patients are not vaccinated.

The country has sustained low transmission of COVID-19 with a positivity rate of less than 2% since February 2022. This is attributed to the early decisive and sustained measures we put in place to curb the spread of COVID-19 and the cooperation of all Ugandans to adhere to these measures, including taking up COVID-19 vaccination.



COVID-19 Vaccination

A total of **44,734,030** doses of various COVID-19 vaccines have been received in the country through donations, and direct procurements by the Government of Uganda.

To-date, **15,268,403** people have received the 1st dose of the COVID-19 vaccine accounting for **71%** of the target population of 22 million people. While **10,250,742** people are fully vaccinated accounting for **48%** of the target population and **59,542** people have received their booster dose.

A breakdown of the vaccination coverage for the first dose among the priority vulnerable populations shows good progress with the following statistics *(health workers - 127.7%; teachers - 90.2%; and the elderly - 80.3%)*

We recently concluded phase II of the Accelerated Mass COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign across the country which was to ensure that all persons 18 years of age and above get their second dose of the vaccines. The process is undergoing.

Vaccination of children aged 5 - 17 years

The Ministry will embark on vaccination of secondary school children to protect them from severe COVID-19. The Pfizer vaccine approved for use in children will be deployed to vaccinate this age group. Pfizer is a two dose vaccine, administered 4 weeks apart.

Vaccination of this age group will start as soon as the second term of school commences on 9th May 2022. In the meantime, preparations are being made as well as engagement with the Ministry of Education and Sports on how to effectively implement this exercise.



The risk of exposure and infection to COVID-19, according to Ministry of Health findings remains the same across all age-groups. Additionally, the school settings, like any congregate settings, are very effective transmission areas for COVID-19. According to our statistics, over 14,000 children contracted COVID-19 since the onset of the pandemic in the country. Therefore, vaccinating children will help reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 within schools, spread to the parents and guardians, school absenteeism and prevent closure of school.

The Ministry of Health working with the Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Local government, and the districts will provide details of the school - based vaccination programme. Of note, any out-of-school eligible children will be vaccinated within the vicinity of the schools.

Amendments to the Travel Restrictions

As we all know, the Ministry of Health with guidance of the Scientists, has over the past two years of COVID-19 pandemic response, been instituting and revising restrictions for both incoming and outbound international passengers. Given the changing COVID-19 epidemiology in the country, the Ministry of Health has updated travel restrictions and testing requirements for both outbound and incoming travelers.



The requirement of PCR testing by all incoming and outgoing travelers at Entebbe International Airport has been adjusted as follows:

- All in-bound and outbound travellers will be required to show proof of **full** COVID-19 vaccination, except for travellers aged 5 years and below.
- Requirement for negative PCR test done within 72 hours pre-boarding for all incoming travellers is suspended with immediate effect for those who are fully vaccinated
- Requirement for negative PCR test done within 72 hours for all outbound travellers is suspended with immediate effect for those who are fully vaccinated, except where it is a requirement of the destination country, or the carrier airline.
- Travellers with partial or no vaccination will be required to present a negative PCR test done within 72 hours of travel.
- Travellers below 5 years are not required to present a negative PCR test upon arrival or departure.

To ensure appropriate COVID-19 surveillance among travellers, the Ministry will be undertaking scheduled and random sampling for COVID-19 testing for inbound travellers. The details of this random targeted testing will be communicated in due course.



Wearing of face masks

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that countries can consider adjusting the mandatory requirement of wearing a face mask at all times when the COVID-19 vaccination coverage is at 70% of the general population.

While progress has been made in vaccinating the population, only **48%** of the targeted population aged 18 years and above are fully vaccinated. Moreover, the current positivity rate is quite low with a recording below 2% for the last 8 weeks.

Therefore, against the above background, the Ministry of Health would like to advise as follows;

- Fully vaccinated individuals will **NOT** be required to wear face masks when they are outdoors provided there are **NO** crowds.
- Wearing of face masks when one is indoors or in closed spaces like public transport, shops, schools and offices etc... where 2 meters distancing can't be observed with other individuals, is required whether one is vaccinated or not
- The vulnerable or high-risk population. i.e. elderly aged 50 years and above and people living with co-morbidities irrespective of age are advised to wear a face mask at all times whether they are vaccinated or not

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CONCLUSION

Despite the gains above, and the impressive epidemiological picture in Uganda, last week, the World Health Organization, and the Committee of the International Health Regulations maintained COVID-19 at the highest level of classification; a Public Health Emergency of International Concern that was declared in January 2020 and a pandemic on 11th March 2020. In addition to the emerging transmission dynamic in the Southern African countries, and parts of Asia, the worst is not yet over.

As we observe the global picture, we continue to remain on high alert for any potential flaring of the pandemic, while maintaining the response tempo until we are convinced that the threat is sufficiently downgraded.

I would now like to take this opportunity to make a special appeal to;

1. Health workers, District Health Officers (DHOs), Resident City Commissioners (RCCs), Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) and City Mayors to;

- Take leadership of the vaccination exercise. It is your responsibility to ensure that the vaccination exercise at the district level takes place in a smooth manner.
- Ensure that all individuals aged 18 years and above receive their doses.
- Ensure that districts that have not used up their vaccines are supported to do so. Mobilize your communities aged 18 years and above to get vaccinated



- Remind Health workers to follow the 'Mix and Match' schedule of vaccines depending on the vaccine availability

2. General Public

- If you have not been vaccinated against COVID-19, please go to the nearest health facility and get your jab. The COVID-19 vaccine is free, safe and effective. Ensure that you complete your dose of the COVID-19 vaccination
- When you have completed 6 months after your last COVID-19 vaccination, ensure that you go to the health facility and get your booster shot. The booster shot provides additional protection against COVID-19
- While COVID-19 positivity has greatly reduced, please be reminded that the deadly disease still exists amongst us. It is your responsibility to maintain good hand hygiene and get vaccinated.

As I conclude, I would like to appreciate all our development partners, implementing partners, MDAs, Private Sector, the United Nations Agencies, and the media for their support towards the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for listening to me.

For God and my Country.

Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng Ocero

Minister for Health/Woman MP, Lira City

27th April, 2022