

SA likely to enter COVID-19 fifth wave in winter or sooner – Phaahla

Friday, February 4, 2022



Health Minister, Dr Joe Phaahla, has warned that the COVID-19 fifth wave is likely to hit South Africa in winter or earlier, depending on the variants of concern. “Only high coverage vaccination will reduce the emergence of more variants,” he said on Friday, during a media briefing.

The Minister announced that the country has now administered over 30 million vaccine doses as of Wednesday night. “It took longer than we had wished for but it’s a significant milestone,” he added.

As of Thursday, government has given 30 100 000 doses to 18 604 643 individuals with at least one jab. This means 46.7% of adults in the country are now vaccinated, while 41.61% are fully jabbed. In addition, 1 276 000 vaccine doses, including second shots, have been given to children between the ages of 12 and 17.

The Minister said that those aged over 60 continue to lead the pack at 67.25% coverage, followed by over 50s at 63.15% and 35 to 49 years at 51%. However, Phaahla has raised concern about the low coverage in the 18 to 34 group that is sitting at 33%.

Meanwhile, the Free State has vaccinated 55.5% of its eligible residents, followed by Western Cape with 54.5%, Limpopo 53.4% and Eastern Cape 51.2%. The rest of the provinces range between 40% and 48% coverage.

However, Gauteng leads with absolute numbers at just under five million individuals and 8.4 million administered doses. In addition, South Africa has now distributed 646 466 booster shots. The department’s data continue to show that the majority of those who are admitted to hospital are unvaccinated.

“Yesterday, we visited Ka-Maqxaki High School in Gqeberha to monitor vaccination and other health services and it was very impressive to see a sizeable queue of learners waiting to be vaccinated and very upbeat about it.”

According to the Minister, vaccination sites remain open and ready to offer services including mobile and pop-up sites.

Phaahla has once again appealed to South Africans to seize the opportunity of protecting themselves and those around them.

“While the fourth wave remains stable even though we are not completely out of it while the rate remains above 10%, we know that the virus is still very far from being eliminated. The only way to get closer to normality safely is if more of us vaccinate including taking boosters once we qualify.” – **SAnews.gov.za**