

As part of the First Standing Call on Vaccines, which covered many of the main questions that the membership had submitted in advance, attendees asked a number of additional questions, which were then answered by the panelists. Those questions and answers are summarized below:

1. Am I able to travel to another region of China to get vaccinated?

No. The name list of those inoculated will be gathered from the local communities and workplaces and will be submitted to make a reservation for the vaccination. During the vaccination process, your reservation and ID card will also be checked.

2. There are different groups of people mentioned: frontline workers, citizens aged 18-59, and others like foreigners and pregnant women. Are they listed in order of priority or just different groups identified by the government?

This is the order of priority that the Chinese government is using for vaccinations. Nationally, frontline healthcare workers and those aged 18 to 59 are prioritized for getting vaccinated. The government will only release a strategy for the rest of the groups such as foreigners, pregnant women and the elderly once more data have been collected for the vaccines. China is using a different strategy to ones found in many western countries, where at risk groups are vaccinated first due to safety concerns. China also has different strategies in different regions and provinces, too.

3. While the BioNTech vaccine is clearly the front runner among foreign vaccines to get approved in China because clinical trials have already been conducted here and it is going through the regular approval process, can other vaccines hope to get approved in China this year even if they haven't completed their clinical trials yet?

Yes. Companies like AstraZeneca are still working with local partners to complete clinical trials, so the process is still ongoing.

4. Can people take an inactivated vaccine first and then take a different vaccine, such as mRNA, later?

This depends on the reason why you would want to be vaccinated again. Is it because you do not have enough antibodies from the inactivated vaccine or you are worried about the variants? The first one can be tested and if you have enough antibodies, it is not recommended to take another vaccine. If it is for the variants, it depends on the situation. There is no available data showing how long you should wait before getting another vaccine for COVID-19.

However, since Chinese vaccines might not be recognized by other countries, such as the US, some people might want to get another vaccine for traveling or business purposes.

5. Does having a vaccine mean you cannot transmit the virus?

If you get the vaccine, you create immunities. If you get exposed to the virus, you will be protected because you have enough ‘soldiers’ in your body. But there are not enough data proving whether you can transmit this virus to others. Therefore, people should still wear masks and continue to social distance after the vaccination. Generally, you won’t transmit to other people after getting vaccinated for other diseases, but it is still too early to know the answer for COVID-19 yet.

6. When will be vaccines be available for the general public?

In Beijing, people will get vaccinated for the inactivated vaccine under the government arrangement after the Chinese New Year. For the BioNTech vaccine, the situation is still not clear.

7. Does your health code get updated after getting vaccinated, so you can show it at airports or borders?

The Sinovac vaccine will provide a certificate proving the vaccination. For those who get the government general vaccination, they could get proof of their vaccination from the government app.

8. Will the vaccine affect other blood test results?

As far as is known, it would not affect other results.

9. What is the relationship between the vaccination and quarantine?

If you are vaccinated and your health code is internationally recognized, it can significantly reduce or stop the need for quarantine. A short quarantine might be required, but we do not yet know the answer and different countries would have different policies.

10. What is the relationship between the vaccine and variants?

The COVID-19 vaccine has shown effectiveness in dealing with variants.

11. What is the comparison between Sinovac and Sinopharm?

The technology is the same and they are both safe and effective.