

Headline: Is one better than none? Why SA's teens are only getting half a COVID jab

Blurb: South Africa has enough unused doses of Pfizer vaccines to immunise half of the country's 6.5-million children aged 12 to 17. This means matriculants will be protected as they sit their final school exams. But they'll only be getting one dose of the two-shot vaccine.

Byline: Bhekisisa Team

All teens between the ages of 12 and 17 can now get a COVID jab.

The plan is to have half of them vaccinated before the schools reopen in early January after the summer school holidays. .

There are about 6.5 million teens in SA, so we'd have to get 3.25 million vaccinated before mid-January.

Adolescents now can get a shot without their parents' permission, according to South African law.

Which vaccine will they receive?

One dose of Pfizer's Comirnaty's vaccine (adults get two shots).

Why only one dose?

Pfizer's vaccine was approved by South Africa's medical regulator in September for children 12 and up.

This emergency approval was for everyone to get two shots of the vaccine.

But the health department has decided to give teens only one shot.

This is because in a small number of cases some teenagers have had a more severe reaction to the jab.

Pfizer's vaccine can temporarily cause inflammation of the heart muscle or outer lining of the heart.

These conditions are called myocarditis or pericarditis, and they occur more frequently among boys and young men than girls.

But the chances of developing this condition is six to seven times lower after just one dose of Pfizer, [US data shows](#).

Once more data is available on this extremely rare side-effect, the government will decide if kids should get a second shot.

The United Kingdom also only gives teens one shot of the Pfizer jab.

Should you be worried about heart inflammation?

Heart inflammation is extremely rare.

June data from the US government's Centres for Disease control shows that out of more than 4.2-million adolescents between 12 and 17 vaccinated, only 147 people reported experiencing myocarditis or pericarditis.

That's just 0.03% of vaccinated adolescents.

And, most people who develop these conditions as a result of vaccination [recover](#) within a few days.

Experts agree that the benefits of vaccinating teens far outweigh the risks.

Research shows the jab provides teens with high protection against developing COVID symptoms and reduces the [chance of adolescents being hospitalised](#).