

# 'Covid is a long way from over'

**HERD IMMUNITY:** JUST 18.6% OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN POPULATION FULLY INOCULATED

» **Fourth wave will hit by end of December – expert.**

.....  
**Citizen reporter**

**P**ublic health medicine specialist, epidemiologist, and infectious diseases specialist Professor Salim Abdool Karim has warned the Covid-fatigued public that the virus is not done with South Africa.

"We are not over this pandemic; even though we are fed up and tired, this virus is still spreading," he said on Algoa FM yesterday.

Karim, who was recently appointed vice-president of the International Science Council, stressed considerable benefits from vaccinating.

**Benefits:**

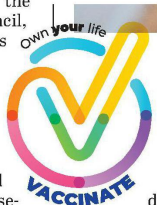
► Vaccinated people are at lower risk of getting Covid when exposed to someone infected.

An Israeli study measured vaccine effectiveness in a household setting, with people who had been infected with the virus. Some recipients were inoculated, but most were not, and "the risk is about 80% lower", said Karim.

► Vaccinated people who are exposed to the virus are less infectious.

A common misconception among the vaccine-hesitant population is: "I can get still get infected even after I vaccinate, so why should I bother?"

Inoculated carriers are less



infectious, and the symptoms don't last as long.

"You have a lower risk of getting infected and if you do get infected, you will be spreading the virus much less because of the time that you will be infectious."

**The fourth wave is coming**

Karim predicts the fourth wave will arrive three months after the third wave comes to an end – by the end of December.

"What's critical about the impending wave is whether we get a new variant," said Karim.

The variant will determine the severity of the fourth wave.

**Booster shots**

Karim also cleared up misconceptions about booster shots.

"The vaccines can maintain their effectiveness for six to eight months for severe diseases and hospitalisation," said Karim.

He said the vaccines are "quite comfortably over 90% effective".

"The efficacy against mild infection is diminishing over time, [as] with any vaccine."

When you get a vaccine, the antibody response is massive, but it does wane over time.

"Because it is waning and we have a delta variant, the two combined results is reduced efficacy in mild infections."

Some people who were vaccinated earlier in the pandemic are eligible for booster shots. But Karim thinks booster shots are only necessary for people:

- With compromised immune systems.
- Are over 60 years old.
- Who had the single Johnson & Johnson dose.

**Vaccinated population**

The required 70% of population immunity could be divided

into four groups and targeted to achieve herd immunity.

**1) Early adopters**

This segment responded well to the call to vaccinate.

"They are like the people who camp outside the store the night before a new product becomes available," said Karim.

**2) Nonchalant vaxxers**

These people are not vaccine-hesitant but rather "nonchalant". They will get their shots when it's convenient.

"If it's raining, they won't go out," said Karim. "You have to do outreach so that you can get to the next group."

**3) The vaccine-hesitant**

This group makes up about 20% to 22% of the population. They need more information and outreach needs a slightly different approach.

**4) Anti-vaxxers**

Anti-vaxxers make up about 11% of the population.

"There's no point in bothering with them because they are usually people who have crazy ideas and believe in conspiracies."

The government is focusing its efforts on the other segments and targeting these groups more effectively.

**Child vaccinations**

Children and younger people are at lower risk of transmitting infections and are less likely to contract severe forms of Covid.

But they can still get it and spread the disease, "so there's quite a big benefit to vaccinating young people from that point of view". Currently, only 18.6% of the population are fully inoculated.

– [news@citizen.co.za](mailto:news@citizen.co.za)