

Covid News: C.D.C. Says Childhood Vaccinations Plummeted Since the Virus Struck >

## Afghanistan gets 700,000 doses of a Chinese vaccine amid a Covid surge overwhelming Kabul.

By Adam Nossiter and Najim Rahim

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Afghanistan received 700,000 doses of a Covid-19 vaccine from China on Thursday amid a worsening crisis and record numbers of known cases, health ministry officials said.

The Ministry of Public Health said it would prioritize people over the age of 55 and those with chronic diseases to receive the doses of the vaccine, made by the Chinese company Sinopharm.

With hospital beds filling up, a persistent shortage of oxygen, and a general failure to adopt the elementary precautions common elsewhere — mask wearing, social distancing — Afghanistan is undergoing its severest period of the pandemic.

Though Afghanistan's testing capacity is severely limited, the country on Thursday recorded its highest ever number of virus cases in a 24-hour period: 1,822 positive tests of 5,343 total — a positivity rate of over 34 percent. There were 56 recorded deaths from Covid-19 over the preceding 24 hours, but the Afghan health system cannot always distinguish Covid from other causes of death in a country where disease and violence are endemic.

"The situation is critical," said Saeed Uddin Jami, a spokesman for the Afghan Public Health Ministry. "There are no empty bed for patients in Kabul hospitals," he said. "Unfortunately, people do not cooperate with us, and they do not take the virus seriously. It is likely that the situation will worsen throughout Afghanistan."

Sinopharm's vaccine uses inactivated coronaviruses to trigger an immune response in the body. Vaccines that use that approach have been shown in studies to be less effective than the vaccines developed by the pharmaceutical companies Pfizer and Moderna, which use newer mRNA technology.

The Chinese donation of the doses of Sinopharm's vaccine follows a February shipment of 500,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine from India that failed to make much of a dent. Nor did a donation of 486,000 doses of AstraZeneca from the Covax global vaccine initiative shift the trajectory of the crisis.

The United States on Friday announced some \$266 million in additional aid for Afghanistan, primarily for Covid response.