



World Health  
Organization

Western Pacific  
Philippines

# WHO statement on COVID-19 vaccines and the National Vaccination Days

20 December 2021 | Statement

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The World Health Organization (WHO) calls on the public to access the available vaccines during the *Bayanihan, Bakunahan 2*.

We also urge the national government and local government units to take advantage of the vaccination drive to inoculate as many as possible, especially those coming from vulnerable groups – the elderly, those with comorbidities, and those from indigent communities.

We have a narrow window of opportunity as Omicron looms on the horizon. As of 18 December 2021, the Omicron variant has been detected in 89 countries, including the Philippines. Current information suggests that Omicron is spreading at a faster rate than other virus variants.

WHO is working with technical partners and researchers around the world to better understand Omicron, including its transmissibility, severity, and impact. However, to date, there is no information to suggest we need to change our response approach.

While we wait for enough evidence, it is prudent for the public to be vaccinated as soon as possible. We need to maximize the opportunity of *Bayanihan, Bakunahan 2* to reach the unvaccinated, especially those among vulnerable groups.

Vaccination reduces the number of cases, disease transmission, disease severity, need for hospitalization and deaths. The vast majority of current infections, as well as severe disease and death, occur in unvaccinated people. Prioritizing those most at risk is vital to reduce the impact of the pandemic on people's lives and well-being.

Data on previous variants show that vaccines that received WHO's Emergency Use Listing (EUL) hold up well against severe forms of the disease, with minor or modest reductions in effectiveness by six months after the last primary dose. Furthermore, WHO reiterates that all vaccines under WHO's EUL remain safe, as observed after millions of doses were administered and continue to be administered across the world, including here in the Philippines.

WHO also emphasizes that the spread of Omicron and future variants will not be solved by vaccines alone. We must continue to do it all to ensure that we have the lowest transmission possible and the lowest strain on our health system.

We advise everyone to protect themselves and protect each other. Get vaccinated as soon as possible, wear a mask, keep distance, open windows, clean your hands, and cough and sneeze safely.

With the increasing global spread of the Omicron variant, WHO will continue to review the evidence and update its recommendations as appropriate.