1) **What are the benefits of getting vaccinated**?

Vaccination is a simple, safe, and effective way of protecting people against harmful diseases. COVID-19 vaccines protect us against the disease by developing an immune response to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19; this immunity helps you fight the virus if you are exposed. It also means that you protect people around you. If you are vaccinated, your risk of infecting other people around you is dramatically reduced. This is particularly important for people at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, such as healthcare providers, elderly adults, and people with underlying medical conditions[1].

After vaccination, immunity against COVID-19 will last at least 6-8 months based on what we currently know. There is still a small possibility to get COVID-19 even when vaccinated; no vaccine is 100% protective. So, it is important to continue taking all public health measures, such as physical distancing, masks, and frequent handwashing. When a big part of the population is vaccinated (approximately 70-85%), immunity against COVID-19 will develop within the community[2].

2) **Who should/should not be vaccinated?**

The objective of the Greek National Campaign for COVID-19 vaccination is currently to vaccinate everyone above 18 years old. Medical professionals can best advise individuals on whether or not they should receive a COVID-19 vaccine. The individuals with a history of thrombosis or severe allergies should speak to a physician first.

There is no evidence that the COVID-19 vaccine has any effect on your chances of becoming pregnant. There is no need to avoid pregnancy after vaccination.

Based on available evidence, people with severe allergic reactions to any ingredients of the COVID-19 vaccine, should generally be excluded from COVID-19 vaccination to avoid possible adverse effects. In case you have any allergies to medication, report it to the medical staff before you are vaccinated. If you are currently sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, you can get vaccinated once your primary symptoms have disappeared.

Should I be vaccinated if I have had COVID-19?

Even if you have already had COVID-19, you should be vaccinated when it is offered to you. The protection that someone gains from having COVID-19 will vary from person to person, and it is not clear how long immunity from natural infection might last[3].

3) **How can I get vaccinated, if I wish to**?

The national vaccination plan is to vaccinate everyone above 18 years of age. The vaccines are free for all. The Government has announced that there will be a specific vaccination plan for persons residing in Reception and Identification Centers (RICs) on the islands and Evros as well as in Open Reception Facilities/sites in the mainland.

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[1] WHO Benefits of getting vaccinated, https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-(covid-19)-vaccines

[2] See https://emvolio.gov.gr/syxnes-erotiseis

[3] WHO. Should I be vaccinated if I get COVID-19 https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-(covid-19)-vaccines

You will be informed by EODY or the site management on when you can get vaccinated against COVID-19.

4) **Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe**?

COVID-19 vaccines are safe and will help protect you against developing severe COVID-19 disease, including hospitalization and death. There are strict protections in place to help ensure the safety of *all* COVID-19 vaccines. The safety requirements for COVID-19 vaccines are the same as for any other vaccine in the European Union. The safety and effectiveness procedures were not bypassed with the rapid roll-out of the Covid-19 vaccines. Before being approved by international, European Union (EU) as well as national medical authorities, every type of vaccine that is provided to you will have gone through very stringent clinical research to be sure that it is **safe and effective and suitable to vaccinate everyone**.

So far, more than three million people have been given a COVID-19 vaccine in Greece and a billion have received the first dose world-wide, and reports of serious side effects, such as allergic reactions or clotting problems, have been very rare. We all have risk of covid infection, that exceeds the risk of these very rare events. As with all vaccines, the use of COVID-19 vaccines continues to be controlled closely so that it remains safe for all who receive them.

5) **Do Covid-19 vaccines cause side effects?**

Like any vaccine, COVID-19 vaccines may cause side effects, most of which are mild or moderate and go away within a few days. Some people experience no side effects. Others have reported common side effects like: swelling, redness and pain around the injection, fever, headache, tiredness, muscle pain, chills, and nausea. You will be asked to wait 15-30 minutes after being vaccinated by medical staff to check your reaction.

Experiencing side effects after getting vaccinated means the vaccine is building protection in your body (immunity) and is working. If the symptoms worsen or there is concern, it is advised to consult a physician or medical staff for an evaluation. Vaccine effects are continually checked by expert authorities worldwide to identify any recurring or new side effects. It is important to note the very low risk of side-effects against the benefit of protection against covid-19 virus.

Long-term side effects
Side effects usually happen within the first few days of getting a Covid-19 vaccine. Serious side effects that cause long-term health problems are very unlikely. Every vaccine, including every COVID-19 vaccine is clinically tested for side effects during an extended period before the vaccine is further tested and approved for wider distribution.

Which vaccine should I take?
You should take the vaccine you are offered. Every vaccine distributed has met the safety and effectiveness standards.

6) **Can we stop taking precautions after being vaccinated?**

Full protection from COVID-19 from the vaccine is provided around 21 days after the second dose (for most vaccines) or single dose (Johnson & Johnson vaccine only). Before this period,

it Is still possible to catch the virus, so it is important to adhere to social distancing measures in between vaccines and after you have been vaccinated.

Even after the 21 days, the COVID-19 vaccine should protect you from becoming sick, but it won't necessarily stop you from infecting other people. It may take some time before everyone is vaccinated, so, it is important that you continue to followCovid-19 prevention measures (masks, hygiene, social distancing). During the winter when people tend to spend more time indoors, it is a good idea to have a flow of air, for example by opening windows frequently.

7) **Where I can I get more information/assistance?**

Information on COVID-19 and vaccinations is available through various sources, most of which are listed below:

➢ Websites:
- National Public Health Organization https://eody.gov.gr/en/covid-19/ | Available in Greek and English
- National Campaign for Vaccination https://emvolio.gov.gr/
- UNHCR Help website: https://help.unhcr.org/greece/
- Refugee.Info: https://www.refugee.info/greece| Available in English, French, Arabic, Farsi, Urdu

➢ Helplines:
- National Public Health Organization (EODY): +30 2105212000, or 1135 | Available in Greek and English 24/7.
- Refugee.Info Facebook Messenger https://www.refugee.info/greece | Available in English, French, Arabic, Farsi, Urdu
- Hellenic Red Cross (HRC) - Multifunctional Center (MFC): +302105140440 (landine) or +306934724893 (Whats App/ Viber), Mon.-Fri. 9am – 8pm| Available in Greek, English, Arabic, Farsi/Dari, Pashto, Russian, French, Swahilli, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Turkish, Urdu, Mandingo, Malinke, Susu, Fula and Kissi.
- Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) Helpline: see here for the schedule https://www.gcr.gr/media/k2/attachments/GCR_HELPLINE_ENGLISH.pdf

➢ In-person[4]:
- Open Accommodation Sites and RICs: NPHO (EODY) field staff.

8) **How to address misinformation and rumours?**

There are a lot of rumors and myths around vaccines and COVID-19. Before considering vaccine information on the Internet, check that the information comes from a trustworthy source and is updated on a regular basis. To help you find them, The World Health Organisation (WHO) has reviewed and certified many websites across the world that only provide information based on reliable scientific evidence and independent reviews by leading technical experts. These websites are all members of the Vaccine Safety Net.

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[4] You can always ask your doctor, or any specialized doctor available near your place of residence.