

UAE starts Covid-19 vaccinations in capital

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The United Arab Emirates has launched COVID-19 vaccinations in the capital Abu Dhabi, health officials said Monday, days after it approved the jab by Chinese drugs giant Sinopharm.

The wealthy Gulf nation is one of the first countries to start widespread

inoculation, after Britain became the first to roll out a campaign using a [vaccine](#) by US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech.

Gulf countries UAE and Bahrain, where third-phase trials of the Sinopharm vaccine were carried out, have both officially registered it for [public use](#) after it was previously approved for emergency use for frontline health workers.

Residents in the capital can book an appointment through the Abu Dhabi Health Services (SEHA) hotline.

"Residents can book an appointment for the vaccine now, free of charge," a SEHA operator told AFP, with local reports saying at least 45 hospitals and clinics were equipped with the vaccine.

Sinopharm—which uses an inactive form of the novel coronavirus—is administered in two doses, 21 days apart, according to SEHA.

The UAE has so far recorded more than 184,000 novel coronavirus cases, including 617 deaths.

China has four vaccines, including Sinopharm, in the final stages of development and is well advanced with mass human testing in a number of countries, including Brazil, the UAE and Turkey.

But unlike vaccines being developed by Moderna, AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson, little information has been published about the safety or efficacy of Chinese vaccines.

In Peru, clinical trials of a Sinopharm vaccine were suspended after neurological problems were detected in a test volunteer.

Chinese vaccine frontrunners Sinovac and Sinopharm had pre-orders for fewer than 500 million doses by mid-November, according to data from London consultancy Airfinity—mostly from countries that have participated in trials.

Britain's AstraZeneca, meanwhile, has pre-orders for 2.4 billion doses, and Pfizer for about half a billion orders.

Two vaccines have undergone third-phase trials in the UAE—the Sinopharm project and Russia's Sputnik-V, named after the Soviet-era satellite.

Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum said in November that he had received an experimental [coronavirus](#) vaccine, joining other top UAE officials to take part in the [trials](#).

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