

Africa CDC director urges youths to boost COVID vaccinations

February 3 2022, by Chinedu Asadu



A child reacts as he receives his Pfizer vaccine against COVID-19 in Diepsloot Township near Johannesburg, Thursday, Oct. 21, 2021. Africa's top health official John Nkengasong on Thursday Feb. 3, 2022, is launching a campaign to enlist young people to encourage vaccinations, as just 11.3% of the continent's 1.3 billion people are vaccinated against COVID-19. Credit: AP Photo/Denis Farrell, File

Africa's top health official is launching a campaign to enlist young people to encourage vaccinations, as just 11.3% of the continent's 1.3 billion people are vaccinated against COVID-19.

Youths will be encouraged "to play an active role" in ramping up inoculations across the continent where the vaccination rate is far below other regions in the world, Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention director John Nkengasong said Thursday.

Africa so far has 10.8 million confirmed infections and 240,000 deaths and vaccination efforts have been accelerating as vaccines doses are "becoming readily available" on the continent, Nkengasong said. In the last four weeks, Africa has seen an average 10% decrease in new cases, he said.

Of the 597 million doses of vaccines that Africa has so far received, 64% have been administered, he said.

The campaign tagged "African Youths for COVID-19 vaccination: Initiative for Saving Lives, Saving Livelihoods" "will be an important initiative" as the median age of Africa's population at 19.5 years, Nkengasong said.

"At least 70% of the population are less than 30, so we really have to engage the youths to play an active role in scaling up the vaccination in terms of mobilizing their peers and reaching out," he said.



A young woman reacts as she receives her Pfizer vaccine against COVID-19 in Diepsloot Township near Johannesburg, Thursday, Oct. 21, 2021. Africa's top health official John Nkengasong on Thursday Feb. 3, 2022, is launching a campaign to enlist young people to encourage vaccinations, as just 11.3% of the continent's 1.3 billion people are vaccinated against COVID-19. Credit: AP Photo/Denis Farrell, File

Another effort will seek to promote self-testing "so that the communities and population take ownership of their own testing and take the [appropriate measures](#)," he said.

"If they know their status, they can take appropriate measures to stay home, protect themselves, protect their loved ones and protect their

communities," Nkengasong said. Rapid tests that can be done at home are not widely available or free in most of Africa's 54 countries. If they are available they are often much too costly for the majority of Africans.

Only 94 million tests—1.1 million in the last week—have so far been conducted across Africa and the [test](#) positivity rate remains relatively high at 11.4%, according to official statistics.

At another briefing on Thursday, the World Health Organization Africa regional director Matshidiso Moeti urged people to comply with public health measures in their respective countries.

In trying to "reach balance," countries are now "working on normalizing the response while managing the risk," Moeti said. South Africa, in particular, has scrapped isolation for people who test positive for the virus but have no symptoms.

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Citation: Africa CDC director urges youths to boost COVID vaccinations (2022, February 3) retrieved 7 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-02-africa-cdc-director-urges-youths.html>

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