

South Korea approves first homemade COVID-19 vaccine

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South Korean Minister of Food and Drug Safety Oh Yu-Kyoung speaks during a briefing at the ministry of Food and Drug Safety in Cheongju, South Korea, Wednesday, June 29, 2022. Health officials in South Korea on Wednesday approved the country's first domestically developed COVID-19 vaccine for people 18 years or older, adding another public health tool in the fight against a prolonged pandemic. Credit: Chun Kyung-hwan/Yonhap via AP

Health officials in South Korea on Wednesday approved the country's first domestically developed COVID-19 vaccine for people 18 years or older, adding another public health tool in the fight against a prolonged pandemic.

In [clinical trials](#) involving some 4,000 participants in South Korea and five other countries, SK Bioscience's two-dose SKYCovione vaccine appeared to be more effective than the broadly used AstraZeneca shots in building immunity against infections, officials at South Korea's Food and Drug Safety Ministry said.

It isn't immediately clear how officials will administer the newly developed vaccine or how big of a role the shots will have in the next phase of the pandemic. The shots were designed for the

original version of the coronavirus, not the more transmissible omicron variant that wreaked havoc in the country earlier this year. U.S. vaccine giants Pfizer and Moderna have been speeding up their development of booster shots targeting omicron and experts say it's possible the virus could evolve again in the coming months.

South Korea's mass immunization campaign has been mainly dependent on Pfizer and Moderna's mRNA shots. But officials say protein vaccines like SKYCovione, which are similar to shots used for years against the common flu and hepatitis B, could appeal to people who are hesitant to use vaccines developed with newer technologies.



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"The approval (of SKYCovione) internationally confirms the abilities of our companies to develop

COVID-19 vaccines," Food and Drug Safety Minister Oh Yu-kyoung said in a briefing. She said SK Bioscience is seeking an approval from the World Health Organization for its shots, which would potentially open export opportunities.

South Korea has eased most of its virus restrictions after battling an omicron surge earlier this year, but some experts say the country may see another rise in infections despite a high vaccination rate because of waning immunities and the possible emergence of new variants.

The country reported 10,463 new cases of the coronavirus on Wednesday, its first daily increase over 10,000 in 20 days. Health Ministry official Son Youngraee said during a separate briefing it's too early to tell whether the country is facing another surge after a months-long downward trend.

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