

Vaccination is simply the best defence against Covid-19

By [Dr Elton Dorkin](#)

6 Dec 2021

The science could barely be more clear: vaccination is humanity's best defence against Covid-19. In a country like ours here in South Africa, with so many immune-compromised and vulnerable people, taking the opportunity to be vaccinated should be common sense, and yet hesitancy and procrastination are rife. Vaccine skeptics, naysayers and deliberately false information are also putting more lives at risk. As we find ourselves with infection rates again rising in many countries, we must call an end to these dangers and move towards introducing Covid-19 vaccination as a requirement in the workplace.

As a major employer, it is Anglo American's duty to put our people first and do everything we can to help keep them healthy and safe. Our WeCare programme that we put in place early last year has gone a long way to address the worst effects of the pandemic for our employees and host communities, in terms of protecting physical and mental health and the livelihoods of all those who rely on us in our own business and beyond the mine gate.

Introducing requirement of full vaccination

For many months, we have strongly encouraged everyone to get vaccinated at the earliest opportunity. And we make it easy – we provide vaccinations to employees and their dependants in South Africa. Now we are starting to engage our workforce as we intend to introduce a requirement of full vaccination for anyone wanting to enter one of our sites or offices in South Africa and around the world.

Anglo American has a long history of supporting major public health interventions and we will not shy away from taking difficult decisions. We must lead from the front, as we have done before in the shape of our pioneering workplace HIV/Aids and TB prevention, care, and treatment programmes.

Our approach to people's health is underpinned by science, of course, and our unshakeable values as a company. Safety and health must be our priority, always.

Anglo American is committed to supporting vaccination because of the vital role it plays in mitigating the impacts of Covid-19. A vaccinated person is far less likely to transmit the virus than an unvaccinated person. In fact, the World Health Organisation (WHO) stated very recently that a fully vaccinated person is 40% less likely to transmit Covid-19.



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6 Dec 2021



Variants occur when a virus has the opportunity to mutate

Variants of a virus occur when that virus has the opportunity to mutate multiple times. But science tells us that in a highly vaccinated population, fewer mutations will occur. It is one reason why Anglo American has invested so much in supporting government vaccination programmes and, in South Africa, developing vaccine infrastructure so that each employee who

wants a vaccine can access it in a way that is safe, localised and dependable.

Yes, it is possible to become infected with Covid-19 even if you are fully vaccinated, but you're much more likely to be shielded from hospitalisation and death, and you are far less likely to transmit it to others. The effect here is not just personal - it is inherently communal: my individual health choice either reduces or increases the burden on the country's health system; it either drives transmission or reduces it; it either takes us forward into a post-Covid world or keeps us locked into a cycle of uncertainty and fear.

A fully vaccinated person who is then infected by Covid-19 can recover from the virus within as little as four days – considerably shorter than an unvaccinated person. Especially for those whose immune systems are already weakened, for example those who live with HIV/Aids across southern Africa, this is a lifeline.



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The virus is not only about you

Behavioural science suggests that people react to threats to their health with fear, panic or sometimes by just not responding at all. Covid-19 has posed a frightening threat to how we live our everyday lives and to our health. In response, scientists worked tirelessly to develop vaccines that are designed to protect every person on this planet. The virus is not only about you; it's about every human being. One person can infect multiple people within minutes if they are infected with Covid-19 and are not vaccinated.

We are doing whatever we can to encourage and support vaccination uptake among our employees and in the communities around our operations. Our robust workplace vaccination programme has sought to provide the facts and dispel the myths about vaccinations. We have a duty to maintain a healthy and safe workplace and we cannot allow the few to endanger the many. We have been open with our employees about the need to keep all options on the table as the pandemic evolves and this now includes our intention to require full vaccination against Covid-19 for access to our sites and offices.



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We implore everyone to get vaccinated

The transmission of Covid-19 will decrease over time only if our vaccination rates improve markedly, which is why we implore everyone to get vaccinated, and to do so without further delay. The approved vaccines are safe, severe side effects are extremely rare, and they protect us all from the worst effects of Covid-19.

Vaccination is nothing new. Less than 1% of humanity has been allergic to any vaccine since their inception against numerous diseases more than 200 years ago. Our responsibility is to the overwhelming majority. Vaccines have been a lifeline against many diseases over the past century. Through them, we have managed to eliminate or substantially reduce debilitating conditions such as tuberculosis, smallpox, polio, measles, mumps and rubella.

We can achieve the same with Covid-19, but everyone must get on board, and get vaccinated, now.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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