

Hospitals to be compensated for Covid shots

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Private hospitals that have already bought covid-19 booster shots at the previous higher price will be compensated by Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute of India, the drugmakers said on Sunday as India began rolling out what it calls 'precautionary' jabs to its vast adult population.

The companies said they will make up the difference by either supplying more doses or selling the vaccines free of cost to these private hospitals. Serum Institute's Covishield and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin are the only ones allowed as booster doses by the regulator.

Three sections of the population -- frontline workers, healthworkers and people over 60 years of age -- are entitled to free vaccines but they must get themselves jabbed at a government clinic or hospital. All others over the age of 18 can access the booster dose by paying for it at a private facility.

Serum Institute and Bharat Biotech received the regulator's nod on the condition that they only supply the vaccines to government hospitals and clinics. Private CVCs, or Covid vaccinations centres, can procure the doses either from the government, which buys in bulk, or directly from manufacturer.

While Bharat Biotech has slashed the price of its vaccine from ₹1,200 per dose to ₹225, Serum Institute of India announced a price cut from Rs600 to Rs225 per dose.

"The price differential for the holding usable stocks of Covishield shall be compensated in the cost-free doses. Due process will be informed to all private hospitals very soon," said Serum Institute of India in a statement while announcing the price revision for Covishield.

Bharat Biotech added, "The price differential with any existing stocks of Covaxin in private hospitals shall be compensated in the form of additional doses. Fresh stocks of Covaxin are available and ready for supplies. Additional production capacity is also available to meet product demand."

According to the health ministry, 4.5 million healthcare workers, 7 million frontline workers and 12.7 million people above 60 years of age have received booster doses so far.

According to government data, healthcare workers number around 10 million, frontline workers 30 million, and the elderly (above 60 years of age) more than 130 million. The total population between 18-59 years is said to number more than 750 million.

The Central government on Friday permitted much-awaited precaution or booster doses for all adults above 18 years of age from Sunday onwards.

These beneficiaries are those individuals who are fully vaccinated and have completed 9 months since receiving their second dose.

Under the ongoing vaccination drive, India has administered more than 1.85 billion doses so far.

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About 96% of all individuals above 15 years of age have received at least one dose while about 83% people in the same age group have received both the doses.