

Booster dose to be free for all above 18 yrs for 75 days

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- **Last week, the ministry reduced the Covid-19 vaccine booster dose gap from nine months to six months. The decision was taken after the National Technical Advisory Group of Immunisation had recommended to revise the duration between the second dose and the precaution dose from nine to six months.**

Covid booster doses will be made available free of cost for everyone over 18 years of age at all Central government run vaccination centres, the Centre announced on Wednesday amid worries over low coverage.

The free doses will be available from 15 July for 75 days.

"India is celebrating 75 years of Independence. On the occasion of Azadi ka Amrit Kaal, the government has decided to give booter dose free of cost to all people above 18 years of age at all government vaccination centres. This new provision will give additional security to the people of India," said information and broadcasting minister Anurag Thakur.

"Under the Amrit Mahotsav of Azadi, a 75-day free vaccination campaign will be conducted from 15 July, in which all citizens above the age of 18 years will be given free vaccination doses at government centres. Hearty thanks to Prime Minister @NarendraModi ji for this decision," tweeted health minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya.

Last week, the health ministry cut the covid-19 vaccine booster dose gap from nine months to six months. The decision was taken after the National Technical Advisory Group of Immunisation a recommended a revision of the duration between second dose and precaution dose from nine months or 39 weeks to six months or 26 weeks.

India's cumulative covid-19 vaccination coverage exceeds 1.99 billion.

The rollout started last year in January.

As of now, the booster dose is available free of cost to only healthcare workers, frontline workers and the elderly population above 60 years of age at government vaccination centres.

Last month, Mint reported that the government is concerned about the low utilization of booster doses, with only 7% of 18-60-year-olds and 40% of over-60s given the jab so far.