

Egypt approves Chinese Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine

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Egypt has approved the use of a COVID-19 vaccine developed by Chinese pharma giant Sinopharm with its rollout to start later in January, the health minister said.

"The Egyptian pharmaceutical authority approved on Saturday the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine," Hala Zayed said late Saturday, on the local MBC Masr channel.

The first batch of the vaccine was delivered in December, with further doses expected this month. © 2021 AFP

"The second shipment of this vaccine is due to arrive in the second or third week of January, and as soon as it arrives, we will start vaccinations," the minister said.

Each batch of the vaccine consists of 50,000 doses, and the ministry has announced that the first group to receive it will be medical workers.

Zayed said Egypt plans to purchase 40 million doses of the Sinopharm jab.

Egypt, the Arab world's most populous country with around 100 million inhabitants, has recorded more than 140,000 cases of the COVID-19 disease, including 7,800 deaths.

After a brief lull, the number of infections rose dramatically in late 2020, from around 100 new cases confirmed per day in October, to some 1,400 daily cases currently.

Sinopharm announced on Wednesday that one of its vaccines, to be distributed in China, was 79 percent effective.

The jab's efficacy is lower than that of vaccines developed by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna—both over 90 percent effective.

A jab developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University has proved 70 percent effective with one dose, and 100 percent effective with two.

Egypt will also receive the AstraZeneca/Oxford [vaccine](#) in the third or fourth week of January, according to Zayed, who added that a contract "was being finalised".

Negotiations with Pfizer "are underway" as well, she added.

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