

Qatar, Dubai roll out Pfizer-BioNTech virus jabs

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Qatar and Dubai launched coronavirus vaccination drives within hours of each other on Wednesday, their governments said, with the elderly and front line workers among the first to receive shots.

In Dubai, a senior citizen was among the first to get the jab, the official Dubai Media Office tweeted, while in Doha a 79-year-old retired university professor was the first to be injected.

The UAE—which is made up of seven emirates including the capital Abu Dhabi and Dubai—approved the emergency registration of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on Tuesday, the same day the first batch arrived from abroad, the official WAM news agency reported.

The first phase of the rollout will target citizens and residents over the age of 60, adults with chronic diseases, people with special needs as well as front line and other key workers. It will be voluntary.

Qatar's first consignment of Pfizer-BioNTech doses landed on a passenger flight from Brussels on Monday, hours after approval was granted. Doha

has said the vaccine will be available to citizens and residents for free and will be voluntary.

"At around 0545 GMT Dr. Abdulla al-Kubaisi, a 79-year-old Qatari citizen and former university professor, became the first person in Qatar to receive the COVID-19 vaccine," the [health ministry](#) said in a statement pushed to users of the country's compulsory contact tracing app.

Along with the elderly man and nurse, a paramedic, a police officer and a driver were among the first to receive the jab in Dubai, which has said vaccination will be "free of charge" for all citizens and residents.

The Emirates' first batch of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine arrived on an Emirates cargo flight from Brussels on Tuesday, WAM said.

The Dubai Media Office said vaccinations would be available at six health authority facilities.

Earlier this month, the United Arab Emirates had already approved the vaccine developed by Chinese drugs giant Sinopharm, which it said was 86 percent effective.

The UAE has so far recorded more than 197,000 cases of the novel coronavirus, including 645 deaths. Qatar has reported 142,448 cases and 243 deaths.

Two vaccines have undergone third-phase trials in the UAE—the Sinopharm project and Russia's Sputnik-V. No trials have been conducted in Qatar.

Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum said in November that he had received an experimental [coronavirus](#) vaccine, joining other top UAE officials to take part in the trials.

Other Gulf countries have also started rolling out their vaccination programmes, with Kuwait and Oman announcing they will start inoculating people

with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on Thursday and Sunday, respectively.

Bahrain has already rollout out Sinopharm and officially registered Pfizer-BioNTech for use, while Saudi Arabia earlier this month kicked off a three-phase COVID-19 vaccination programme using the Pfizer-BioNTech [vaccine](#).

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