

# Coronavirus Immunisation Programme

## Guideline for offering vaccines against COVID-19 to foreign seafarers calling at Norwegian ports

29.09.2021



### Background

The Norwegian government has decided that seafarers on vessels calling at Norwegian ports can be vaccinated free of charge in Norway. Many of these seafarers stay on the vessels for extended periods of time and it can be difficult for them to receive a vaccine in their home country.

Vaccination of foreign seafarers on ships that regularly call at Norwegian ports or will stay in Norwegian ports over time, can contribute to the protection of seafarers, to the control of transmission globally and to transmission control in Norway. This will improve transmission control in Norway in several ways:

- The risk of seafarers needing health care and treatment for COVID-19 in Norway is reduced.
  - The risk of transmission to or from seafarers during port-calls in Norway is reduced.
  - The risk of transmission to or from seafarers during transit on land is reduced.
  - The risk of transmission on board to colleagues or passengers who live in Norway is reduced.
- Vaccination will be especially important on vessels with many passengers.

### Organisation

#### Responsibility for vaccination and ordering vaccine doses

These seafarers are not considered to fall under the municipalities' duty to offer vaccines under the framework of the Norwegian coronavirus immunisation programme (cf. Norwegian regulations: *Forskrift om nasjonalt vaksinasjonsprogram § 1*), and the municipalities therefore do not have a duty to offer such vaccination.

The vaccination can therefore be organised in one of two ways:

1. The shipping companies or their agents may organise the vaccination. For example, shipping companies or their agents may organise vaccination through an agreement with a private company who can travel to the relevant ports/vessels or receive the seafarers in their own premises. The shipping companies or their agents must ensure that the provider has the necessary expertise and authorisations before entering into a vaccination agreement with a private company.
2. The municipality in which the vessel is at port may choose to reach out to the shipping companies/agents and offer foreign seafarers vaccination at the municipality vaccination site(s). The municipalities may in these cases charge for administering the dose but will not charge for the vaccines.

Whatever option is chosen, the municipality in which the vessel has its port of call must set aside and hand over the required number of doses to the private company which has agreed to carry out vaccination on behalf of the shipping company. The vaccines are given free of charge. If the

municipality does not have sufficient vaccine doses available, these must be ordered in the usual way from NIPH.

It is important to point out that there may be up to two weeks lead time from vaccines being ordered until they arrive in the municipality, so vaccination must be planned well in advance of the port call. Well in advance of the planned vaccination, the shipping company/agents or the company they have entered into cooperation with, must contact the municipality's vaccination coordinator/officials to determine how they wish to carry out the vaccination and the number of doses required.

The municipalities must keep track of how many doses they intend for this purpose and notify NIPH if they see that the number of doses come at the expense of available doses to its own population.

### Choice of vaccines

Both vaccines available in the Norwegian coronavirus immunisation program, Comirnaty from BioNTech / Pfizer and Spikewax from Moderna, can be used. Both require two doses to achieve status as fully vaccinated, 3 and 4 weeks as minimum interval, respectively. Both vaccines are available in large parts of the world. One dose of these mRNA vaccines provides good protection against serious illness, but less protection against infection and transmission. Even if they are not staying long enough in a Norwegian port to receive the second dose, this should not prevent them from receiving the first dose. There is no set maximum interval so they can receive their second dose upon return to a Norwegian port or in another country that offers this vaccine. The seafarers may therefore receive doses 1 and 2 in different municipalities.

### Information about the vaccines

It is the shipping companies or their agents who must determine who is to be offered vaccination and ensure that these individuals are given enough information. The Norwegian Institute of Public Health has information about the vaccines available in a variety of languages. Information material can be found here:

<https://www.fhi.no/en/id/vaccines/coronavirus-immunisation-programme/coronavirus-vaccine/>

### Registration

If the foreign seafarers have a Norwegian identification number (national identity number or D number), vaccination must be registered in the Norwegian Immunisation Registry (SYSVAK).

Those who do not have a Norwegian identification number will not be able to get a Norwegian digital COVID-19 certificate. However, the vaccinator must ensure they adhere to medical record keeping protocols when vaccinating.

All seafarers who are vaccinated in Norway and who cannot obtain proof of their vaccination via registration in SYSVAK or vaccine certificate from Helsenorge.no, must receive other written proof of their vaccination. Proof of vaccination must include the date of vaccination, name of the vaccine including batch number, and whether it was dose 1 or 2. The Norwegian Institute of Public Health recommends that proof of vaccination be given in the following manner:

1. Printing of patient record in English
2. Completion of WHO's International vaccination certificate.

The [WHO International vaccination certificate](#) can be ordered from NIPH.