

Assam: Sputnik V preferred jab for shorter gap between doses

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GUWAHATI: The Sputnik V vaccine, made by Russia, has already become a popular shot in Assam among beneficiaries because of its ready availability and the shorter duration of time between the two shots. Narayana Hospitals in Guwahati began the Sputnik V vaccination drive on June 30 as the first Sputnik V vaccination centre in the region. After vaccinating more than 700 people with the first dose, the hospital administration is now getting ready to administer the second shot. "Most of the beneficiaries are happy with Sputnik V because within a much shorter span of time they are getting fully immunised. We are going to start our second dose from July 20 itself," director of the hospital, Ajit Kumar Bellamkonda, told TOI on Thursday.

Bellamkonda said their team is strictly maintaining and monitoring the storage and cold supply chain of Sputnik V in association with Dr Reddy's Laboratories and Indigo Airlines. "We are equipped with three high-end refrigerators which are capable of maintaining (-) 25 degree Celsius temperature, the required temperature to keep the vaccines safely," he said.

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Earlier, when Dr Reddy's had established communication with some private hospitals in Assam, the logistical concerns in the northeast were worrying. The requisite temperatures in cold chains to store Sputnik V is much lower than the requirements for Covaxin and Covishield, which are usually stored at 2 to 4 degree celsius. Sputnik V needs to be stored between -20 and -25 degree Celsius.

Sputnik V got usage approval in India by the DGCI on April 13 through Dr Reddy's Laboratory. "Sputnik V is one of the three vaccines in the world with efficacy of over 90%. The Sputnik V vaccine efficacy is said to be 91.6%. Sputnik V is the world's first registered vaccine based on a well studied human adenoviral vector-based platform and is already registered in more than 65 countries," Bellamkonda claimed.

Among those who have got the Sputnik V vaccine here are the employees of some industrial units who could not spare time to queue up in government hospitals for getting vaccinated. "We have a busy work schedule. So our company made the arrangements for the jabs for which the hospital informed us well in advance," said Santosh Dwivedi, who works with a pharma company at Kukurmara near Guwahati.

The health department is constantly monitoring how the Sputnik V vaccine is being administered at the Narayana Hospitals that was set up in north Guwahati on a public-private partnership mode. "Probably due to the low price factor, Sputnik V is being preferred by some hospitals. Since there is a huge rush for Covaxin and Covishield, getting the new vaccines may be easier," immunization spokesperson and director of health services (family welfare), Assam, Munindra Nath Ngatey, said.

Even though about 70.65 lakh people in Assam have received the first jab till date, there is no certainty when they will get the second shot. After the gap between the two shots of widely available Covishield was extended up to 12-16 weeks in the country, the inoculation pace has reduced in the state. Low vaccine supply is also responsible for this slowdown. But the impending danger is a possible third wave. Researchers have already found that the severity of the infection is low among those patients who got both the jabs.