

Nod for Zydus Cadila's covid jab paves the way for reopening of schools



An Ahmedabad-based drug maker— Zydus Cadila — has manufactured ZyCoV-D, the second indigenous vaccine after Covaxin.

2 min read · 23 Aug 2021

Neetu Chandra Sharma

* The ZyCoV-D vaccine will be administered to adults and children aged above 12 years.

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI)'s emergency use authorization for **Zydus Cadila's** covid vaccine may finally pave the way for educational institutions to reopen. The vaccine is expected to be available for children above 12 years by the end of September.

The Union health ministry will soon revise the guidelines for opening schools and issue an advisory on the inoculation programme for children and adolescents, officials said.

"The government has been issuing advisories for schools and colleges from time to time through the pandemic. Now that the Zydus vaccine has been approved by the authorities, we may revise the existing guidelines for schools soon. Children above 12 years will now be vaccinated," said a senior health ministry official.

The **DCGI** approved the use of ZyCoV-D in India's vaccination programme on Friday.

ZyCoV-D, which has been indigenously developed by the Ahmadabad-based company, is the world's first DNA-based vaccine for covid, which will be administered in both children above 12 years and adults.

Interim results from phase 3 clinical trials of the Zydus vaccine, involving more than 28,000 volunteers, showed an efficacy of 66.6% for symptomatic RT-PCR positive cases.

The government's move has enthused educationists and school owners alike. "Approval of the vaccine for children above 12 years is encouraging. The challenge will be for the government to prioritize vaccination for students to ensure schools can reopen. This could enable increased attendance and help mitigate the significant social-emotional losses students have gone through during the covid lockdown," said Manit Jain, co-founder, The Heritage Schools.

Likewise, Anirudh Khaitan, vice chairman, Khaitan Public School, Ghaziabad, said he was relieved and excited to find out about the development of the Zydus vaccine for children.

"We are of the firm belief that in 3-4 months, the world will realize that covid is a thing of the past and we have to look forward and rebuild our community from what it has been through. Schools will be fully functional from April 2022, and the first steps towards normalcy will start soon. KPS is waiting for their children to be back so the empty classrooms can fill with laughter and joy once again," said Khaitan.

Experts also highlighted the importance of opening educational institutions. "Covid has hit the education sector hard. Students also have been under severe strain. Now, the government has given some hope with the new vaccination programme. The Zydus vaccine brings hope for schools and colleges," said Vivek Mishra, dean of Sri Sharda Group of Institutions, Lucknow.

School closures not only affect students, teachers and families, but have far-reaching economic and social consequences such as student debt, digital learning, food insecurity, homelessness and access to childcare, Mishra added.

According to Unicef, the closure of 1.5 million schools due to the pandemic in India in 2020 impacted 247 million children of elementary and secondary schools.