



Inactivated or weakened virus:

BBIBP-CorV/Sinopharm; CoronaVac; Covaxin

These vaccines use a form of the virus that has been inactivated or weakened by heat or chemicals so it does not cause disease, but is recognised by the body as foreign and stimulates an immune response. Many existing vaccines are similarly produced and are very safe, but it is difficult to increase production of this vaccine type.



Protein subunit:

EpiVacCorona

These include small pieces of virus protein, not the whole virus. The most common protein included is the spike protein or a key component of it. Once introduced to the body it is recognised as foreign and stimulates an immune response.

Source: World Health Organization (WHO)

6.3 Vaccinating the Ship’s Crew

If seafarers are to be vaccinated on board or prior to a complete crew change, it may be appropriate to vaccinate all seafarers at the same time or to vaccinate some now and others at a later date.

Both options have clear advantages and disadvantages:

Situation	Advantages	Disadvantages
All ship’s crew vaccinated at the same time	All are protected after 12–14 days. Transmission effects remain unknown. If COVID-19 may still occur, it is likely to be a milder disease. All seafarers are vaccinated if this is mandated in ports or for travel to and from the ship.	Seafarers may experience side effects over the next 24–48 hours which may affect ability to work, cause confusion in diagnosis and affect ship operation.
Ship’s crew vaccinated in separate groups	Not all seafarers will potentially experience side effects at the same time so with planning the operation of the ship should be less affected	Not everyone on board is protected until all are vaccinated. Some seafarers travelling to or from a ship may encounter issues if vaccination is mandated by an airline, country of transit, or country of destination.



6.4 Key Questions

1. Are vaccines safe?

All vaccines must undergo many phases of trials, first in a laboratory and then in human volunteers, before approval for use in the wider population. Appropriate national, regional or international authorities review and analyse the trial results. The authorities review the vaccine components, their quality, safety and effectiveness. When national and regional authorities are satisfied that the vaccine is both effective at preventing disease in humans and safe to administer to people, it is authorised for use in the country or region. WHO comprehensively evaluates available evidence and regularly updates its vaccine position papers.

2. Who can have the COVID-19 vaccines?

Everyone should be encouraged to have the vaccine including:

<p>People who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 following testing</p>	<p>Studies show that people who have had COVID-19 may be infected again, and that immunity after clinical disease may not protect a person against the new mutations. Protection from the vaccine is likely to be broader and people can be vaccinated shortly after recovery from the disease. No testing is necessary. However, due to the limited supply of vaccines, vaccinations may be deferred for a number of months or the vaccination schedule modified.</p>
<p>Women wishing to have children</p>	<p>There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines have a negative effect on fertility or cause problems with becoming pregnant.</p>

Vaccination in the following groups should be discussed with a healthcare professional and a decision taken on an individual basis:

<p>People with allergies to any component of the vaccine</p>	<p>Although there have been few severe allergic (anaphylactic) reactions to the vaccine, those with allergies to any vaccine component should not be vaccinated until reviewed by an appropriate doctor. Others with a history of allergy, anaphylaxis or severe asthma should undergo a risk assessment and, if vaccinated, be monitored closely for the recommended period of time.</p>
<p>People who are currently unwell</p>	<p>These people should mention this to their healthcare provider to ensure that it is appropriate to be vaccinated at the time.</p>
<p>Pregnant women</p>	<p>Pregnant women are at higher risk of severe disease, and COVID-19 is associated with an increased risk of preterm birth. Insufficient data is currently available to routinely recommend vaccination. If a pregnant or breastfeeding woman is at unavoidable risk of high exposure or has a significant underlying medical condition, vaccination should be considered on an individual basis.</p>
<p>Breastfeeding women</p>	<p>It is not yet clear whether COVID-19 vaccines can be excreted through breastfeeding and, if they are, what effect they may have on the milk or infant. mRNA vaccines are not thought to have any effect on the infant. People who are breastfeeding should discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination with their healthcare provider.</p>
<p>Young people</p>	<p>Currently vaccines are being tested to see if they are appropriate for young people and advice should be taken as to whether the specific vaccine being proposed has been authorised for people under 18 years of age.</p>



3. How soon does protection start after having the vaccine?

Protection starts to develop approximately 12 days after the injection is given. Some vaccines require 2 doses to give the maximum protection.

4. How can vaccines be procured?

Currently COVID-19 vaccines can only be accessed through national, government-run vaccination programmes. The industry is reviewing ways for seafarers to obtain authorised vaccines in the near term.

5. How long does immunity last and how often is a vaccine required?

Ongoing studies to establish how long a person is immune to the COVID-19 virus after vaccination with different vaccines will determine how often a vaccine is required, for example, annually like the flu vaccine or less frequently.

6. Are there any side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine?

Side effects of the COVID-19 vaccines are reported to be mild and short lived, lasting up to 48 hours. Serious side effects are reported to be extremely rare. Side effects can occur after the first or second dose. Local reactions such as pain, redness and swelling are not uncommon, particularly in those under 55 years. Up to 50% may suffer headache, fever or fatigue. These side effects respond well to Paracetamol and usually settle within two days. If symptoms persist, the seafarer should approach the officer responsible for medical care who should then contact TMAS. Seafarers should discuss any concerns with the vaccination provider.

7. Do seafarers need to observe all rules, quarantine and travel restrictions after being vaccinated?

Yes, currently all quarantine rules and travel restrictions need to be observed, even after vaccination.

8. Can a seafarer pass the virus to others once they have had the vaccine?

It is currently unknown whether a vaccinated person can still carry the virus in their nose and throat without any symptoms and whether they can pass it on to others. Until this is clear, it is essential that everybody, vaccinated or not, follows the guidelines for physical distancing, washing hands with soap and water or the use of hand sanitiser, good respiratory hygiene and the use of masks where appropriate.

9. Is the vaccine effective against the new mutations of the virus?

Manufacturers and governments are investigating whether the different vaccines are effective against the identified virus mutations. Early laboratory trials indicate that vaccines currently authorised are effective against the new known variants.

10. Is it important to know what type of vaccine has been given?

Yes it is important. It is currently unclear whether the authorities in different countries will accept all vaccines available today or in the near future to permit entry within their borders. It is always recommended that information about the vaccine is obtained and hard or electronic copies to certify proof of vaccination are obtained and are kept safely together with the seafarers' travel documents. Where possible, proof of vaccination should be recorded in the national language and with an English translation. Current recommendations are that a second dose of vaccine where required should be the same make of vaccine as the first although this may change with the results of ongoing trials.

11. Will consuming food affect the efficacy of the vaccination?

No, vaccinations are not affected by having food before or after the injection is administered. It is advisable to avoid alcohol before having any vaccine and for a few days afterward.

12. Do the vaccines contain animal products?

Historically pork gelatine has been used in some vaccines. The Pfizer-BioNTech, Oxford AstraZeneca and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines do not contain pork gelatine.

13. Can the vaccine give me a positive PCR or rapid antigen test?

No, none of the vaccines currently authorised cause a positive result on a test taken with a swab and used to see if you have current infection. Experts are currently looking at how vaccination may affect the results of antibody tests that indicate you have had a previous infection.



6.5 Vaccinations – Key Points to Remember

Fact	Once Vaccinated	Not Vaccinated
Risk of illness	Reduced	High
Symptoms	Milder	Worse
Protection	After 12–14 days of first dose	Limited to antibodies from a previous infection
Further protection	Enhanced after second dose	
Wearing a mask and physical distancing	Yes, continue to follow health and safety guidelines to protect yourselves and others	Yes, continue to follow health and safety guidelines to protect yourselves and others

ICS has produced a guidance document on vaccinating ship crew in ports, see *Coronavirus (COVID-19): Roadmap for Vaccination of International Seafarers*: <https://www.ics-shipping.org/publication/coronavirus-covid-19-roadmap-for-vaccination-of-international-seafarers/>

7 Assistance for All Seafarers to Access Medical Care in Ports

Under the ILO MLC 2006, port States must ensure that any seafarers on board ships in their territory who need immediate medical care are given access to medical facilities on shore. Medical assistance to seafarers in ports may be limited and, before sending a seafarer ashore for medical care, the person(s) responsible for on board medical care should be in direct contact with the receiving medical service. Alternatively, such contact can be made by a TMAS service involved in the care of the seafarer.

Further medical care can be arranged through the ship’s agent or other port intermediaries. This is necessary as hospitals and clinics may not be allowed, or may not want, to receive patients that are at risk of infection, or potentially a risk of causing infection or considered not urgent.

If a seafarer cannot be brought ashore for medical care, the person(s) responsible for on board medical care must seek advice from a TMAS or other medical advice service with experience in handling medical issues and to identify possible contacts on land, if this has not already been done.

If a seafarer has not had contact with anyone for 14 days with COVID-19 and is not showing any symptoms of COVID-19, they are unlikely to pose a risk and port authorities should use discretion and identify suitable aid and assistance.

Ship visitors and other intermediaries in ports should be made aware of the seafarer’s situation and try to mediate where possible.

Some seafarers in critical need of medical attention have been prevented from disembarking for urgent treatment. There have also been occasions when it has proved difficult to properly manage removal of seafarers who have died on board.

National and local restrictions are impacting seafarers who require urgent medical care, both for COVID-19 and non COVID-19 cases. The ILO, IMO and WHO have reminded all member States that seafarers are key workers and entitled to medical care and assistance under the IHR, SOLAS, MLC and STCW.



Shipping companies experiencing such issues should contact their flag State and telemedical services for urgent assistance. National shipowners' associations should be informed, so that they can alert ICS which will take action at an international level.

8 Other Medical Issues during COVID-19

8.1 Mental Health Guidance for Seafarers

The circumstances associated with the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak may pose unique challenges to seafarers and their families. Seafarers may become bored, frustrated or lonely, and their families may also be experiencing difficulties. Everyone reacts differently to events, and changes in thoughts, feelings and behaviour vary between people and over time. Seafarers must nurture their mind as well as their body and seek further support if required. Different strategies to enhance mental health and wellbeing are provided in [Annex F](#).

8.2 Managing Physical Symptoms Triggered by Stress and Anxiety

The following short-lived symptoms may arise for people with a low mood or anxiety:

- Faster, irregular or more noticeable heartbeat;
- Feeling lightheaded and dizzy;
- Headaches; and
- Chest pains or loss of appetite.

It can be difficult to know what causes these symptoms, but they are often experienced due to stress, anxiety or low mood and may worsen when people focus on them. Seafarers who are concerned about physical symptoms should speak to the person(s) responsible for on board medical care and if necessary seek advice from telemedical services.

Anyone experiencing stress, feelings of anxiety or low mood, should:

- Use the International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) mental health practical tools available at: <https://www.seafarerswelfare.org/seafarer-health-information-programme/good-mental-health>; and
- Watch the video, Managing Your Mental Health during the COVID 19 Pandemic, available at: <https://www.seafarerswelfare.org/seafarer-health-information-programme/coronavirus-covid-19/managing-your-mental-health-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>



8.3 Managing Concerns

Supplies	Review how to replace supplies to avoid running out. Choose healthy food, as it may not be possible to get as much exercise as usual.
Financial Concerns	There may be concerns about work and money on return home. Such issues can impact mental health. Find out what help is available in the country of residency.
Caring Responsibilities	Seafarers may worry about supporting dependents at home or others on board. Contact your home community to seek help if necessary in providing care or support.
When being treated or taking medication for existing conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue accessing treatment and support where possible; • Continue taking medication; and • Seek further support if necessary.

Annex A11 is a poster which advises on coping with stress during COVID-19.

It can also be downloaded from the ICS website: www.ics-shipping.org/covid19.

Annex F is a table highlighting measures to enhance mental health and wellbeing.

8.4 Handling a Mental Health Crisis and Emergency

Added stress due to COVID-19 may impact mental health and shipping companies should take a mental health emergency as seriously as a physical health emergency. Seafarers may think they are having a mental health crisis and no longer feel able to cope or control their situation and may feel:

- Great emotional distress or anxiety;
- Unable to cope with daily life or work; and
- Like considering self-harm or even suicide, or experience or hear voices (hallucinations).

If this occurs, seek immediate expert assessment and advice for the best course of action from a mental health professional. If under the care of a mental health provider, contact the specific advisor for advice.

8.5 Expiry and Renewal of Medical and Ship Sanitation Certificates

ILO, IMO and WHO have encouraged issuing administrations by issuing a joint statement on medical certificates of seafarers, ship sanitation certificates and medical care of seafarers in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under the STCW Convention and the MLC 2006, the maximum validity of medical certificates is two years. If the period of validity of a medical certificate expires during a voyage, the medical certificate shall continue in force until the next port of call, where a medical practitioner recognised by the State Party is available, provided this does not exceed three months.

ILO has recognised that restrictions imposed to contain the pandemic may, under certain circumstances, constitute a situation of force majeure in which it becomes materially impossible to renew a medical certificate within the maximum period of three months foreseen by the STCW Convention and the MLC 2006.



Administrations have been encouraged to take a pragmatic and practical approach regarding the extension of medical certificates, as strictly necessary, and to notify ships, seafarers and relevant administrations accordingly. Port State control authorities are also encouraged to take a similar approach in relation to medical certificates and their acceptance in the exercise of control procedures in accordance with the MLC 2006.

Medical certificates must be renewed as soon as the situation improves. Maritime administrations should regularly review the evolution of the situation.

For more information, see the ILO *Information Note on Maritime Labour Issues and Coronavirus (COVID-19)*: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---normes/documents/genericdocument/wcms_741024.pdf

For further guidance, see the ICS guidance Coronavirus (COVID-19): Managing Ship and Seafarer

Certificates during the Pandemic: www.ics-shipping.org/covid19.

8.6 Renewal of Prescriptions

In view of the present uncertainty and time needed to resolve crew changes, seafarers should request, without delay, access to long-term personal medications on prescription that are running low so that they can be purchased and delivered as essential items.

National legislation differs and it is not always possible to obtain certain types of medicine, to use repeat prescriptions or to validate electronic prescriptions, especially under the current restrictions. Seafarers whose essential personal medication is running low should:

- Alert the ship's Master of the need to obtain a repeat prescription, providing accurate details of the medication required, including correct dosage to assist the ship's request to the port agent and provide information to the port authorities to obtain the medicine;
- Where possible, obtain an electronic prescription from their doctor before arriving in a port or provide a hard copy of the prescription (if available) to allow the port agent to verify that it is accepted to purchase the medicine;
- If privacy and confidentiality is required and seafarers do not wish to notify the ship's management, they should contact a seafarers' centre or mission to obtain information, delivery and purchase of medicines, noting that during the current restrictions, the activity of seafarers' centres and missions has been heavily restricted; and
- Request supplies to be sent from their country of residence, if possible. However, this may be difficult under the current restrictions and delivery may be delayed. Parcels containing prescriptions may also be subject to quarantine, depending on national and company policies on COVID-19 contagion prevention.

The table in **Annex G** outlines the requirements for requesting repeat prescriptions for seafarers whose personal medication is running low. The list is not exhaustive and it is important to make contact with the port authorities or local welfare workers in advance of arrival to establish how best this can be achieved on a timely basis.

8.7 Provision of Sanitary Care Products

It is recognised that seafarers have found it difficult to access sanitary care products when they have been at sea for a number of months during the pandemic.

Companies are encouraged to ensure adequate stock of sanitary products are made available on board ships before they sail.



Annex A

Posters

World Health Organization (WHO) and European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), among others, have provided advice to avoid the spread of COVID-19. To highlight their key messages and to help seafarers know how best to protect themselves and those they meet, ICS has produced the following posters, which can be used on ships or as part of a company's communications.

The posters are also available to download from the ICS website:

www.ics-shipping.org/covid19.



Protect yourself and others from getting sick

When coughing and sneezing, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or a flexed elbow



Throw the tissue into a closed bin immediately after use

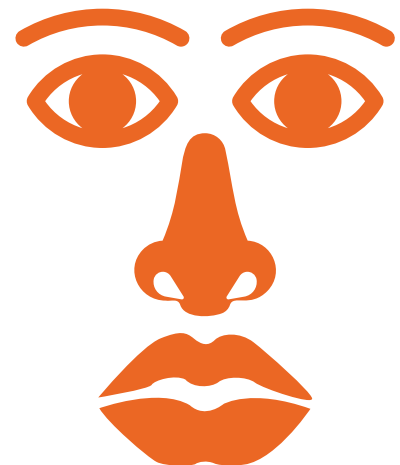


Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or with soap and water for at least 20 seconds:

- After coughing or sneezing
- When caring for the sick
- Before, during and after preparing food
- Before eating
- After toilet use
- When hands are visibly dirty



Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth



Stay healthy while travelling

Avoid these modes of travel if you have a fever or a cough



Eat only well-cooked food



Avoid spitting in public



Avoid close contact and avoid travel with animals, particularly in markets



When coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or flexed elbow. Throw the tissue into a closed bin immediately after use and clean your hands



Frequently clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or with soap and water for at least 20 seconds



Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth



Avoid close contact with people suffering from a fever or a cough



If wearing a face mask, be sure it covers your mouth and nose and do not touch it once on. Immediately discard single-use masks after each use and clean your hands after removing masks



Where possible, maintain distance from fellow travellers. If you become sick while travelling, tell crew or ground staff



Seek medical care early if you become sick, and share your history with your health provider

