

'Time for annual Covid-19 jabs'

Prioritise safety of vulnerable groups amid new reality, say health experts

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PETALING JAYA: As Singapore grapples with a surge in Covid-19 cases in recent weeks and vulnerable groups there are advised to take additional jabs, health experts say Malaysia should also take the same measures.

They said another dose of the Covid-19 vaccine is needed to boost immunity after the waning effects of the previous shot as the vaccines offer protection for only up to six months.

Universiti Putra Malaysia Public Health Medicine expert Prof Dr Malina Osman said such boosters are generally recommended for vulnerable groups.

"In general, it is recommended for those who are vulnerable to get the booster, but I am not sure whether the stock of Covid-19 vaccines currently available in the country is effective against the current strain," she said.

Prof Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh, a health economics and public health specialist



The advertisement for StarProperty FAIR 2024 features a family of four (a man, a woman, and two children) standing in front of a house. The text includes 'StarProperty FAIR 2024' and '6-9 June 2024 Central i-City, Shah Alam'. A QR code is provided for more information. A circular seal in the top right corner reads 'Pameran Edisi Bumiputera Hartanah'.

with Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Faculty of Medicine, said Malaysia could potentially see a spike in new Covid-19 cases following rising caseloads in both Singapore and Australia.

She proposed that Covid-19 shots be taken annually like flu shots, adding that booster shots will offer better protection

against the mutating virus.

These booster shots, she said, should be based on the current strain that is circulating.

Public health expert and former Health Ministry official Datuk Zainal Ariffin Omar said Covid-19 has evolved, adding that it is similar to other respiratory diseases such as influenza.

He said people should observe the basic precautionary measures and seek treatment if needed.

Zainal Ariffin also encouraged vulnerable groups to take additional shots if they are available.

He noted that many cases may go unreported as Covid-19 is now seen as just another flu-like illness.

Checks on MySejahtera showed that only the Sinovac vaccine is being offered, although there are no vaccination centres available.

As of June 2, there were 9,398 active Covid-19 cases with 142 hospitalisations.

No deaths were reported and only one patient was ventilated.

On May 19, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said the ministry was closely monitoring the situation in Singapore as the caseload in the republic had doubled.

The caseload reached 25,900 in the week between May 5 and May 11, up from 13,700 the previous week. A total of 280 hospitalisations were reported.

About two-thirds of the infections in the current wave were driven by the KP.1 and KP.2 subvariants.

Singapore's Health Ministry has called on vulnerable groups, including senior citizens, to get an additional Covid-19 jab.

Mobile vaccination teams will also be deployed across Singapore from now until June 28. This will make it convenient for vulnerable seniors to get their vaccinations.

The ministry has also made the Novavax Covid-19 jab, which is an updated form of the vaccine, available under its national vaccination programme.

The World Health Organisation has classified KP.2 as a variant under monitoring.