

Monthly Bulletin  
**Gov-HER-Nance**  
Ensuring Gender Equity and  
Socio-Economic Resilience  
During COVID-19



Women are generally the primary caregivers in Pakistani society. And with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, that burden of care has vastly increased. Data\* shows that 83% of a woman's time is spent at home, providing care for household members, home maintenance and self-care. It is also reflected in the limited mobility of many Pakistani women. They are often four times less mobile than men, leading to limited information availability. Their need for updated information is critical to providing efficient care for their families. This bulletin aims to reach women and provide them with COVID-19-related news to help them navigate around issues of safety, community and local governance.

Accountability Lab Pakistan (ALP), with support from the Health Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany is publishing bulletins under the "Governance Ensuring Gender Equity and Socioeconomic Impact during COVID-19" campaign. This campaign aims to build and strengthen the resilience of marginalized populations, especially women, in three districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa against the negative impacts of COVID-19 and other future pandemics and health emergencies.

These bulletins include important government decisions, community feedback, verified information, valid concerns, and other questions from the ground around health, safety and local governance.

\*Source: [UNWomen](#)

# FACT



**Getting COVID-19 vaccination is safer and a more dependable way to build immunity than getting sick with it.**

COVID-19 vaccination causes a more predictable immune response than infection with the virus that causes COVID-19.

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine gives most people a high level of protection against the COVID-19 virus and can provide [added protection for people who already had COVID-19](#). [One study](#) showed that people who already had COVID-19 and did not get vaccinated after their recovery are more than 2 times as likely to get COVID-19 again compared to those who get fully vaccinated after their recovery. All [Covid-19 vaccines](#) currently available in Pakistan are [effective](#) at preventing Covid-19.

Getting sick with Covid-19 can offer some protection from future illness, sometimes called “ natural immunity,” but the [level of protection](#) people get from having Covid-19 may vary depending on how mild or severe their illness was, the time since their infection, and their age. Getting a Covid-19 vaccination is also a [safer way to build protection](#) than getting sick with Covid-19. Covid-19 vaccination helps protect you by creating an [antibody response](#) without you having to experience sickness. Getting yourself vaccinated may also protect people around you, particularly people at increased risk for severe illness from Covid-19. If you get sick, you can spread Covid-19 to others. You can also continue to have [long-term health issues](#) after a COVID-19 infection.

Source: [muhealth.org](https://muhealth.org)

# MYTH



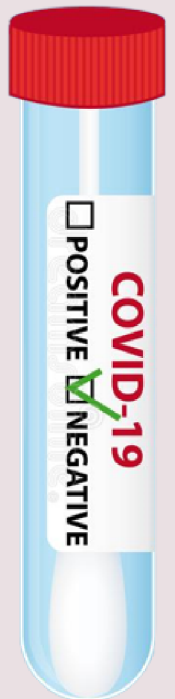
**A negative COVID-19 test means you are safe from COVID.**

The statement mentioned above is false!

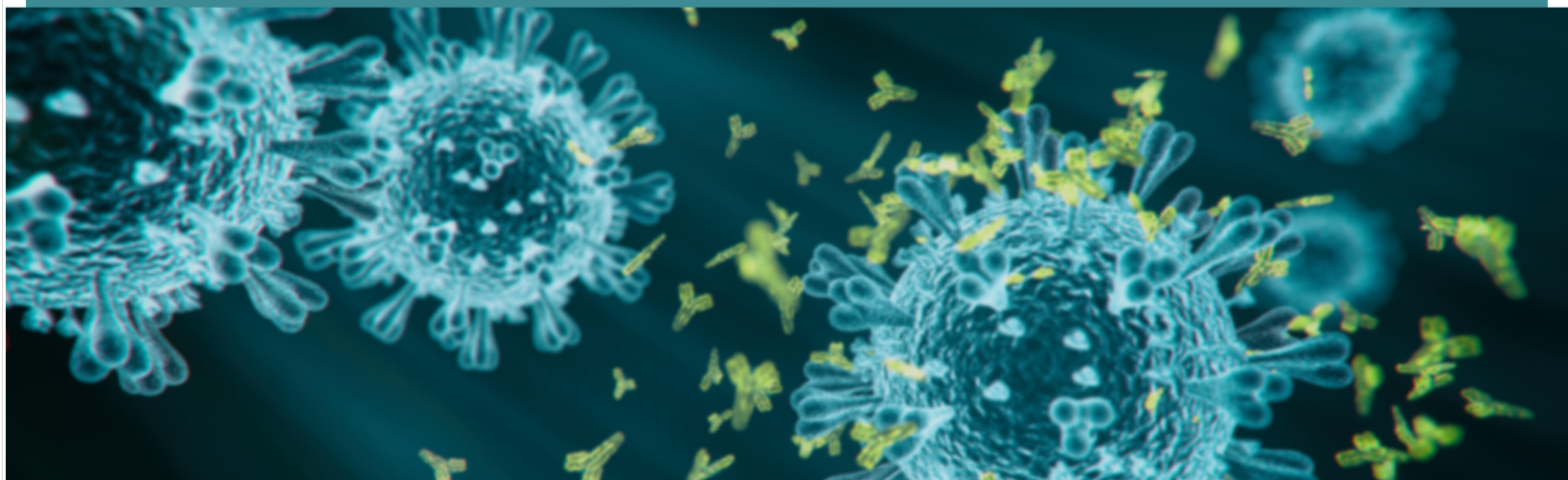
If you get yourself tested for COVID-19 test and the result is negative, that means you probably were not infected at the time your sample was collected. Additionally, if you get tested too soon after exposure to the coronavirus, it could be too early for signs of infection to show up on the test.

Also, testing negative for the coronavirus now does not mean you cannot become infected in the future or that you are immune from getting COVID-19.

Everyone should take preventive measures including Covid-19 vaccines, booster shots, physical or social distancing, quarantining, ventilation of indoor spaces, covering coughs and sneezes, hand washing and keeping unwashed hands away from the face. The use of face masks or coverings has been recommended in public settings to minimize the risk of transmissions.



Source: [Johns Hopkins Medicine](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org)



## Coronavirus: Here it Comes Again

Most of the world had bid farewell to the coronavirus pandemic and returned to normal. Many countries stopped daily reporting of cases. Mask mandates had been lifted or were being unnoticed in most countries and testing dropped to very low numbers. Vaccine uptake has turned out to be very low and there may be an actual chance of millions of vaccine doses expiring in the following couple of months in some rich countries while still, millions are unvaccinated in other countries. Government leaders across the board wanted to move beyond the pandemic and start operating on different geopolitical issues. Continuous pandemic status within the country was considered horrific for the country's profile. but, SARS-COV-2 (the virus which causes Covid-19) no longer cares about how others are feeling about it and is continuously churning new variations and sub-variants to better fit and be successful. Now Covid-19 cases are creeping up in many countries including the USA, UK, UAE, India and Pakistan.

However, daily reported Covid-19 numbers aren't that high (except in UAE) as compared to previous waves. There are multiple reasons for these reduced mentioned numbers. There is decreased testing by governments and the general public is also not going for Covid-19 testing even if they have symptoms.

Many symptomatic patients at the moment are opting for rapid tests which are not stated in national numbers. That has given a fake sense of normalcy to governments and populations, and they had the illusion that the pandemic had ended. In UAE, however, there is a demand for periodic Covid-19 testing before you can enter any public spaces and there, we see greater realistic new wave numbers that are comparable to preceding waves. There are reports of an increase in hospitalization numbers too, but they continually lag for two to three weeks.

Source: [tribune.com.pk](https://tribune.com.pk)

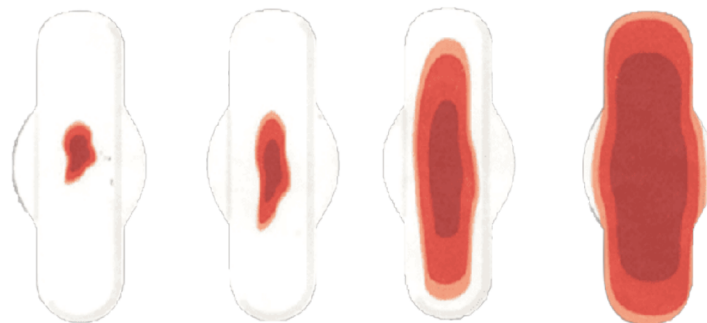
## Does the Virus or Vaccine mess with the Menstrual Cycle?

Menstruation is very dynamic. Sometimes it is heavy and sometimes it is not. It also depends upon our physical activity, external environment and immunity triggers. Just a little bit of stress can make a difference in the days and amount of bleeding, says Dr. Sarika Gupta, Senior Consultant of the Oncology and Robotic Gynecology Department at Apollo Hospital, New Delhi. It's completely normal for menstrual cycles to vary slightly from month to month, but if you've noticed unusual changes right around the time you had [Covid-19](#) or the vaccination or booster shots that help prevent it, it's not at all in your head. You're now part of a scientifically recognized crowd.

[A survey of approximately 39,000 people published on July 15 in the journal Science Advances](#) is the most comprehensive analysis to date of the menstrual changes reported by both pre and post-menopausal individuals in the first two weeks following a Covid-19 vaccine dose. And while the study authors say such changes aren't generally dangerous, there's no doubt they're happening.

They found that 42.1 percent of menstruating survey respondents reported a heavier menstrual flow after receiving the Covid-19 vaccine. Some experienced this in the first week following a shot, and others saw changes up to 14 days later. But not everyone was affected: Roughly an equal number of people, 43.6 percent, reported no change to their menstrual flow after the vaccine and 14.3 percent saw a lighter flow.

International studies found the same thing. A [Norwegian Institute of Public Health study posted in January 2022](#) on the association between coronavirus vaccines and menstrual changes reported several instances of period disturbances among women ages 18 to 30. About 8 per cent of women reported heavier than normal bleeding before their first dose, and about 14 per cent experienced heavier bleeding after their first dose. Approximately 9 per cent reported shorter or longer than normal cycles before the first dose, compared with 12 per cent after.



There were also higher rates of more painful periods than normal: 11 percent before versus 15 percent after. The risks of these symptom changes were similar after participants received the second vaccine dose. The study found, however, that periods had returned to normal by the time the second dose was given, about two to three months after the first.

Source: [Lifestyle News, The Indian Express](#)



# EXPERT INTERVIEW

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In this month's expert interview section, we came into a conversation with a health expert on the impact COVID-19 made on Women's Health. On the request of the interviewee, we have kept her name and credentials anonymous.

**During the past couple of years, as a result of limited mobility due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was observed that women's access to health providers was minimal. What impact do you think this had on the physical health of women in general?**

Even before the pandemic, females had limited access to health care in Pakistan, but COVID-19 escalated this issue even more. This resulted in various psychological impacts on patients especially women as compared to physical effects. During a meta-analysis published in Asian journal of Psychiatry (volume 56), the overall prevalence of anxiety was 42% in pregnant women, while Covid-19 depression was 25%. It was observed that pregnant women were more concerned about others than themselves in the time of Covid. Younger pregnant women were seen to be more vulnerable to anxiety and depression.

**Is there any evidence to suggest that coronavirus affects pregnant women in an adverse way? If yes, we request you to kindly elaborate on this.**

Women who are pregnant or were recently pregnant are at risk of severe illness with Covid-19. Severe illness means that you might need to be hospitalized, have intensive care or be placed on a ventilator to help with breathing issues. Expecting mothers with Covid-19 are also more likely to deliver a baby before the start of the 37th week of pregnancy (premature birth). Pregnant women with Covid-19 might also be at increased risk of problems such as stillbirth and pregnancy loss. Pregnant women who have other medical conditions such as diabetes also might be at even higher risk of severe illness due to Covid-19

If you are expecting, it is recommended that you contact your healthcare provider right away if you have Covid-19 symptoms or if you've been exposed to someone with Covid-19. It's recommended that you get tested for the Covid-19 virus. Before going to your appointment., call ahead of time to tell your healthcare provider about your symptoms and possible exposure.

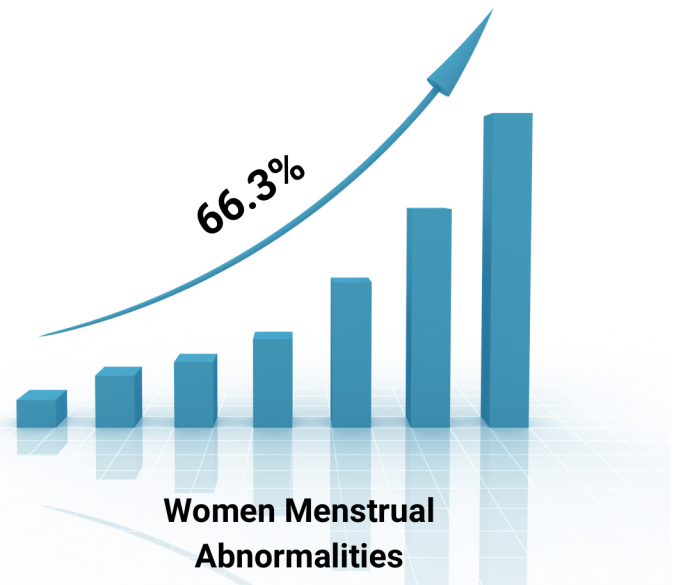


## There has been an ongoing debate on digital spaces regarding the disturbance in the menstrual cycle of women after contracting Covid-19. Is this true?

According to data analysis from a clinical trial MECOVAC survey published in March 2022, 50-60% of child bearing age of women who received the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine reported menstrual irregularities, regardless of type of vaccine. But these irregularities self resolve more than 90% within 2 months without any complication or intervention.

Since the emergence of COVID-19 vaccinations, many females around the world are reporting abnormalities in their menstrual periods post-vaccination.

According to Cross-Sectional research in the MENA (the Middle East and North Africa) region, overall 66.3% of women experienced menstrual abnormalities after vaccination. Of those, signs and symptoms were regarded after a week in 30.5%, and within a month in 86.8%. Furthermore, 93.6% of the signs and symptoms resolved within 2 months.



## How should women prepare themselves to deal with such situations in the case of future pandemics?

Not women only, everyone should prepare for the worst outcomes and how to deal with such situations. As another period of global turmoil unfolds with war and a refugee crisis looming overhead, no one knows what the future will bring but the resilience that women have shown during the pandemic will be crucial in whatever comes next.

Physical and mental health should be optimized.

Self-care should be prioritized by using personal protective equipment and other measures to focus on prevention, mental health and wellbeing.

Mobility and exercise should be promoted.

One should see doctors regularly rather than wait for a medical crisis often through telehealth.



## VACCINATION CENTRES

### MARDAN

DHQ Hospital Mardan  
03005921350

Mardan Medical Complex, Mardan  
03339298814

### NOWSHERA

Cat D Hospital, Manki Sharif  
03028318682

District Head Quarter Hospital  
Nowshera  
03005712208

### PESHAWAR

Hayat Abad Medical Complex  
Hayatabad  
03005669116

Khyber Teaching Hospital  
University Town  
03339677767