

Interval between Pfizer-BioNTech doses can stretch to six weeks, says Khairy



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PETALING JAYA: The interval between the first and second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine can be stretched from three weeks to six weeks apart unless there is a variant of concern in the area, says Khairy Jamaluddin.

"Even though the strategy from three weeks to six weeks will allow us to administer the vaccine to more people, we also have to look at variants of concern which will impact the efficacy of the vaccine," the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme coordinating minister said during

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Khairy added that data from Pfizer-BioNTech have so far shown that one dose would only provide 33% protection against the Indian variant while two doses would provide 88% protection.

"Even though this strategy is good and provides more coverage, the amount of protection against the Indian variant is much lower.

"So, we will look at the prevalence of the variant of concern at a locality. If the prevalence of the variant of concern is low, then we will make a decision to stretch the interval between administering the two doses," he said.

Conversely, if the prevalence of the variant of concern is high in a certain area, they would stick with the three-week interval between the two doses to ensure best protection.

Khairy also noted this would only apply to the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and not the Sinovac or AstraZeneca vaccines.

"For Sinovac, the advisory is to maintain the present dosing intervals because there is no data yet on whether increasing the dosing intervals will affect its efficacy. We will maintain it at three weeks.

"For AstraZeneca we are monitoring the situation. If the prevalence of the variants continue to grow we might shorten the dosing interval. For now, we are maintaining it at 12 weeks," he said.

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