

To defeat Covid-19, an extensive vaccination is better than repeated tests

Press release of the French National Academy of Medicine

June 23, 2021

Although the symbolic threshold of 30 million first-time vaccinations was crossed on June 13, and vaccination has been opened to adolescents aged from 12 to 17 years old since June 15, the dynamism of the national Covid-19 vaccination campaign seems to be waning in France, making it unlikely to reach the vaccination coverage rate of 80% of the population in October, i.e. the level of collective immunity necessary to avoid a resurgence of the epidemic in the fourth trimester.

Despite its efficiency, safety and free access, a large part of the population is still not interested in vaccination, despite a very active communication policy. Aware of the low effectiveness of attempts to persuade people through education, the French National Academy of Medicine has recommended the creation of a "vaccine pass" to encourage people who are reluctant to be vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2 [1] and even called for considering the gradual introduction of a compulsory vaccination, given the importance of the issue in terms of public health [2].

Among the factors that may divert individuals from vaccination, we have to wonder about the repeated use of RT-PCR or antigenic tests, which are offered free of charge in France, unlike in most European countries.

These screening tests are at the heart of the "Test-Alert-Protect" approach. More than two million of these tests are carried out every week in France, and they have become as usual as complying with barrier gestures by French people living under the threat of Covid-19. The fact that these tests are free of charge plays an essential role in the effectiveness of the diagnostic process and in the search for contact cases.

With the steady decline in the national incidence rate of Covid-19 since April, the practice of diagnostic testing is however tending to decrease, while that of screening tests to obtain a "sanitary pass" is intensifying as the summer holidays approach. In force since June 9, the "sanitary pass" is encouraging more and more people to use screening tests and to repeat them at will, as the validity of a

negative result does not exceed 48 to 72 hours, particularly those who do not wish to be vaccinated against Covid-19.

This is why, in order to rapidly raise the national level of vaccination coverage during the summer by more vigorously encouraging hesitant individuals, the French National Academy of Medicine recommends:

- to maintain free RT-PCR and antigenic tests prescribed to confirm a suspected case of Covid-19 and to fulfill epidemiological purposes (tracing surveys downstream and upstream of confirmed cases);
- to suspend the reimbursement of RT-PCR and antigenic tests performed for personal convenience (obtaining a health pass, international travel, participation in group events) in unvaccinated persons;
- to monitor the impact of this measure on the vaccination compliance rate.

1. Press release of the French National Academy of Medicine " Certificate of vaccination against Covid-19: a provisional "pass" to boost the country's activity and promote adherence to vaccination", April 29, 2021

2. Press release of the French National Academy of Medicine ""Obligation" is not a fool word when it applies to vaccination against Covid-19", May 25, 2021