



Do not overstep the health pass

Press release of the French National Academy of Medicine

October 28, 2021

The Covid-19 pandemic is not over. With the cold season, the epidemiological situation is evolving worryingly in Russia as well as in several countries of Northern and Eastern Europe. In France, the incidence of reported infections increases again, exceeding 6000 cases per day. Faced with the possibility of a 5th wave in the coming weeks, two measures have been considered by the government:

1. to make the validity of the health pass dependent on the administration of a booster dose for people over 65 years and/or with co-morbidities, in order to strengthen their protection against severe forms of the disease;
2. to allow school directors to know the anti-Covid vaccination status of students in order to facilitate the fight against the spread of coronavirus in schools, colleges and high schools.

The first of these measures transgresses the role of the health pass, which was to limit the risk of transmission of the virus and to encourage the population to be vaccinated. It induces some uncertainty about the effectiveness of the vaccination and unjustifiably discriminates against the most vulnerable people who already agreed to receive the first two doses of vaccine.

- The rationale for a booster vaccination after an interval of 6 months is justified by the gradual decline of post-vaccination immunity of people at risk of developing a form of Covid-19 requiring hospitalization [1]. But should we constrain this sensitized population, the vast majority of whom will spontaneously agree to receive the vaccine booster? Shouldn't incentives be targeted first at all those who have not yet been vaccinated, including 20% of adults?

The second of these measures would impose a new derogation of medical confidentiality by authorizing school directors to know about the vaccination

status of children. This bill project would go against the government's September 30 announcement that the health pass would become mandatory for adolescents aged 12 years and 2 months to 17 years, as it is for adults, but would not be required to enter schools, colleges or high schools. Such a control by the school administration could only be accepted if the vaccination against Covid-19 was mandatory, which is not yet the case.

Aware of the need to prepare for a new epidemic outbreak, **the French National Academy of Medicine** recalls the necessity to increase the vaccination coverage of the population to more than 90% and to urgently immunize the most vulnerable persons who have not yet been vaccinated [2].

- for elderly or chronically ill people who were vaccinated 6 months ago or more, the Academy disapproves the suspension of the health pass for latecomers and advises them to combine the anti-Covid booster and the seasonal flu vaccination on the same day (one injection in each arm) as soon as possible;
- for schoolchildren over 12 years and high school students, the Academy considers that the control of the vaccination status by the school management will become legitimate when the vaccination against Covid-19 will be compulsory; the vaccination pass could then replace the current health pass;
- for the entire population, vaccinated or not, the Academy recommends maintaining the barrier gestures and wearing a mask in public spaces during the entire winter season.

1. French Haute Autorité de Santé press release "Covid-19: HAS expands the scope of the booster dose", October 6, 2021.

2. French National Academy of Medicine press release "Anti-Covid vaccination; is it time for booster shots? ", August 16, 2021.