

For safe spa-cures, the obligation to vaccinate against Covid-19 must be extended to all professionals working in thermal establishments

Press release of the French National Academy of Medicine

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The list of health professionals subjected to the vaccination obligation against Covid-19, detailed in the law No 2021-1040 of August 5, 2021, related to the management of the health crisis [1], does not include the staff of thermal establishments, except those who have the status of health professionals (doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, dieticians).

Thermal establishments are recognized as care establishments, but not as health care establishments. They are therefore not included in the scope of application of the " vaccination pass " .

Despite a significant drop in attendance due to the health crisis (-43.5% compared to 2019), they welcomed 195,000 spa guests in 2020 and 326,000 in 2021 from the second half of May. The implementation of the thermal sanitary referential validated by the General Health Directorate has allowed the delivery of care with a high level of safety, no cluster having been notified in the thermal establishments and no thermal establishment having had to be closed.

Spa treatments are currently delivered by agents who are not considered as health professionals, therefore not subject to the vaccination obligation. However, they work in a very close physical proximity with their patients, mostly elderly or suffering from co-morbidities, exposing them to the risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2. This category of staff, which represents 70% of the workers in a thermal establishment, would have a vaccination coverage against Covid-19 close to 90%. Likewise, the administrative and technical staffs, who can be in regular or occasional contact with the patients, are not covered by the vaccination obligation.

Concerned about the risk of viral transmission linked to individual and collective care in a misting atmosphere, the French National Academy of Medicine recommended in May 2021 that all the staff of thermal establishments should be assimilated to health professionals and benefit from vaccination against Covid-19 with the same priority [2].

On its side, the National Council of thermal spas, which gathers all French operators, expressed the wish that all of its staff be subjected to the vaccination obligation in order to protect and reassure the patients.

Most of the thermal spas resuming their activities in spring and considering the still active circulation of SARS-CoV-2 in the territories, **the French National Academy of Medicine recommends** that all staff working in thermal spas be included in the list of health professionals subjected to compulsory vaccination against Covid-19.

[1] Légifrance. LAW n° 2021-1040 of August 5, 2021, relative to the management of the health crisis (1). <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000043909676>

[2] Press release of the French National Academy of Medicine "Is it safe to reopen spa thermal baths?", May 12, 2021