

Community Bulletin

#11

Lebanon

1 to 30 November 2022

28
New Deaths



1,573
Cases in October



44.3%
Received Two Doses



Introduction to Rooted in Trust

Rooted in Trust (RiT) is a USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA)-funded project run by Internews to support humanitarian and public health agencies combat and manage the spread of rumors and misinformation about COVID-19. (1) The project was recently re-launched in September 2021 with its second chapter (RiT2.0) expected to run until end of 2022.

In this bulletin, Internews profiles commonly occurring rumors across social media sites and offline through our partners' activities in Lebanon between 1 and 30 November 2022. Our partners "Endless Medical Advantage" are active in engaging both the Syrian & Lebanese communities in the Bekaa region, and "Maharat" engage with different communities of all nationalities living in all regions of Lebanon.

During this period, 50 rumors were collected from Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram, in addition to private groups and accounts that have a relatively high user engagement. An additional 46 rumors were collected offline through aimed activities conducted by our partners, with the goal of reaching populations and groups that are less active online and who get their rumors through word of mouth.

2 rumors were subsequently selected for this bulletin which fall under the recurring themes of "COVID-19 Vaccinations", "Hoax", "Pregnancy", "Communicable Disease" "Cholera" and "Other Health Topics."

COVID-19 situation overview in the country

Lebanon has seen 1,573 new cases over the period spanning the 1st till the 30th of November, (2) with 28 new deaths, (3) and with the virus spreading more prominently among young adults aged 20 to 29. (4) Lebanon is now situated in Level 2 of community transmission, (5) with the average positivity rate of 4%, but it's important to note that the number of tests has declined in recent months due to many factors including people not being willing to test due to mild symptoms, and under-reported lab results by the private sector. (6)

The overall COVID-19 vaccine coverage in the country is 44.3% of people who received two doses, (7) which is still considered very low compared to the target to reach community immunity: having at least 85% of target population reach 2 doses.

Abiding by preventative measures is important as Lebanon is anticipating a new wave of COVID-19 starting the end of December, where we've seen a spike of cases at this time in previous years, especially after holiday festivities and a high number of people visiting from abroad.

Vaccine roll-out:

People of all nationalities living in Lebanon can get vaccinated, including Syrians, Palestinians, and migrant workers, even if their residency documents are not up to date, and no prior registration is needed to receive the vaccine: (8)

List of vaccination centers: <https://cdn.me-qr.com/pdf/7695678.pdf>

1st Dose	Everyone over the age of five years
2nd Dose	Available to all those who have received the vaccine 3 weeks or more prior
3rd Dose	Available to all those who have received the second dose five months ago or more
4th Dose	Available to all, six months after receiving the third dose

Rumor #1

Communicable disease; Cholera

Fact Checking

- ✓ In an interview done with healthcare specialist May Jurdi about the risks of eating raw food locally since the spread of the cholera outbreak, she shares that no fruit or vegetable is more dangerous than another, if they are all cleaned properly, especially if they are to be eaten raw. (9)
- ✓ In agricultural regions of Lebanon, namely in the Bekaa area where most of the produce comes from, there are strict regulations for water quality enforced at the concerned ministries level and the municipal level, according to Tarshishi, head of Bekaa Farmers Association. (10)
- ✓ According to WHO, the most prevalent method of cholera spread is by drinking water or eating food contaminated with cholera bacteria. (11) Even before the cholera pandemic started spreading in Lebanon, the MoPH has joined efforts with the WASH sector and the health sector partners to improve the quality and quantity of water being provided to households, including ITS, and to farmers everywhere in the country. (12)
- ✓ Since then, to control the outbreak, one of the measures being rigorously applied is testing of main water sources, especially in areas of outbreak. (13) This, along with the Oral Cholera Vaccination (OCV) campaign, has led to stabilization of rate of spread.
- ✓ Irrigated fresh vegetables and fruits could be portal for dissemination of human pathogens. However, the types of infection-causing bacteria that can stay inside the vegetable due to being watered with contaminated or unclean water does not include cholera, (14) which means that:
 - It is enough to wash and disinfect your vegetables with a chlorine solution to prevent getting cholera from consuming them raw. To make the disinfecting wash, use two drops of chlorine for every liter of water, and leave your produce for half an hour before consuming raw. (15)
 - It also means produce coming from our neighboring Syria could be also safely consumed after cleaning properly, and not just Lebanese produce.



"Good news for the Lebanese: No cholera if you eat Lebanese produce!"

-- Shared on Twitter, on an account that belongs to a Traditional News media outlet, with a high following of 59,100

Recommendations

For the Community

- **Learn about the disease:** Knowing essential facts can be detrimental for your health and the health of your community. To know more about cholera symptoms, prevention, and treatment methods, ask your trusted physician, or visit UNICEF Lebanon Cholera Page:
 - **For English:**
<https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/cholera-lebanon>
 - **For Arabic:**
<https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/ar/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D9%88%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86>
- **Getting the OCV alone is not enough to protect you against cholera:** While getting vaccinated as soon as it becomes available, especially if you live in one of the areas where cholera is already spreading, it does not substitute for preventative care.
- **In case of suspected case of cholera, seek immediate healthcare:** If left untreated, the disease can be deadly within just hours of infection as it can cause severe dehydration.

Hotlines for Cholera:

- 1760 – Red Cross
- 1787 – MoPH
- 01 832 700 – Hospital Admission
- Cholera testing is free.



- Practice prevention methods:

Preventive methods



Drink or use safe water.
It is recommended to drink water from sealed bottles from a guaranteed source



Avoid drinking from the same vessel as others



Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds regularly, before preparing or eating foods and after using the toilet.



Maintain personal and food hygiene



Cook food very well and eat it immediately after cooking



Wash fruits and vegetables well by leaving them in a container with chlorine added in specific proportions



Avoid eating food exposed to insects and flies



Avoid eating raw meat



Maintaining cleanliness of the house, especially toilets and garbage places (use of chlorine)



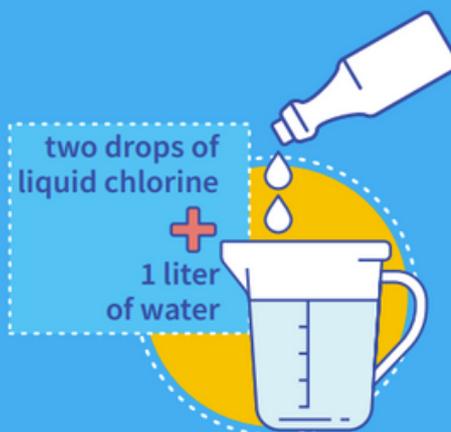
Sterilization of water used for drinking, washing and cooking by:

- boiling for ten minutes
- chlorine treatment

How to sterilize water, vegetables and fruits using chlorine



Use unscented household chlorine liquid (which contains 5.25% chlorine)



Add two drops of liquid chlorine for every 1 liter of water



Add 40 drops or 2 ml or 1/4 teaspoon of liquid chlorine for every 20 liters of water



Wait half an hour (30 minutes) before using or drinking the water



Vegetables and fruits can be sterilized leaving them in chlorinated water for half an hour before eating them

Rumor #2

“COVID-19 Vaccinations”,
“Hoax”, “Pregnancy”

Fact Checking

- ✓ Vaccines do not cause infertility. There is currently no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause fertility problems in women or men. (16)
- ✓ Real-world evidence has shown that COVID-19 vaccines are safe if you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning pregnancy, (17) and you can receive the vaccine at any stage of pregnancy.
- ✓ High maternal death rates are linked to COVID-19 infections not COVID-19 vaccinations, as well as lessened doctor visits by expecting mothers throughout their pregnancy and after, especially Syrian mothers, due to the unaffordability of medical visits when it comes to transportation and high fees. (18)
- ✓ According to the non-profit organization Anera, (19) public health interventions have been scarce across refugee camps since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, COVID-19 deaths were elevated among Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, with a fatality rate that is four times and three times the national average, respectively. (20)
- ✓ Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian, and Migrant Workers have all been receiving the same vaccination in vaccination centers based on availability, since the beginning of the pandemic.
- ✓ As of recently, only the Pfizer vaccine is available in Lebanon, and is being administered through all vaccination centers, without the need for prior registration of personal information, nor a prior appointment. (21)
- ✓ When there were different vaccines available in Lebanon, only one was available at a given vaccination center over a certain time, and it was being administered to visitors regardless of their nationality.



"The covid-19 vaccines are actually contraceptives. The UN created this vaccine to control the number of Syrian people"

-- Shared offline, collected by our partner EMA, located in Bekaa region and active among Syrian refugee informal tented settlements (ITS), through targeted rumor-tracking and social listening activities

Recommendations

For the Community

- **If you experience side-effects that you are concerned about after getting any COVID-19 vaccine**, you can contact the MoPH vaccine hotline free-of-charge on **1214** to report your symptoms and get further directions and assistance.
- **Seek care from your physician.** Find a list of centers that provide subsidized healthcare all over Lebanon here:
<https://www.moph.gov.lb/userfiles/files/HealthCareSystem/PHC/phcc.pdf>
- **Refugees can check this list of hospitals** they can access and contact the UNHCR NExtCare Hotline **01 504 020** at any time to check if they are supported by UNHCR and other humanitarian partners.

Midwifery Network:

With the economic collapse the country is currently facing, and the increasing cost of health services as well as inaccessibility to affordable and safe transportation, many people are opting not to seek medical help even when it is needed. For these reasons, a network of midwife coordinators has been set up to facilitate the referrals and health care access of high-risk pregnant women and pregnant women with COVID-19 in particular.

Below are contact details for midwife focal points per area:

	Governorate	Name	Phone #	Email
1	Bekaa	Zeinab Zeaiter	03 643 829	zeinabzeaiter4@hotmail.com
2	North Lebanon	Mahdieh Awad	70 100 703	mehdiehawad@gmail.com
3	Mount Lebanon	Mimo Haddad	81 480 619	mimo_h_haddad@hotmail.com
4	Beirut	Alaa Joumaa	71 246 955	Alaa.joumaa@icloud.com
5	South Lebanon	Amal Jawad	03 544 587	amaljawad_@hotmail.com amaljawad1970@gmail.com



Important Numbers and Helplines

- MOPH Hotlines: Corona **1787** | Vaccine **1214** (both free)
- COVID-19 call center **01-594459**
- Airport Quarantine Section **01-629352**
- Preventive Medicine Center **01-843769** | **01-830300**
- Epidemiological Surveillance Unit
01-614194 | **01-614196**
- WHO Lebanon **01-612970/1/2**
- Hospital Admission Hotline **01 - 832700**
- LRC Emergency Hotline **140**
- LRC Medical Consultations and Oxygen Machine Request for COVID-19 Patients Hotline **1760**
- Endless Medical Advantage – Bekaa number for information and referral services **76-864 721**



Rooted in Trust Project Manager
Rawan Ajami (rajami@internews.org)

Rooted in Trust website

<https://rootedintrust.org> 🔍

Practical Resources

- [WHO dashboard](https://covid19.who.int)
(<https://covid19.who.int>)
- [WHO COVID-19 page](https://covid19.who.int)
(<https://covid19.who.int>)
- [Protect yourself \(English/Arabic\)](https://covid19.who.int)
(<https://covid19.who.int>)
- [Q&A \(English/Arabic\)](https://covid19.who.int)
(<https://covid19.who.int>)
- [WHO Lebanon website](https://www.who.int/ar)
(<https://www.who.int/ar>)
- [MoPH Lebanon COVID-19 information page](https://moph.gov.lb)
(moph.gov.lb)
- [WHO Refugee and Migrant Health Fact sheet](https://covid19.who.int)
(<https://covid19.who.int>)
- [WHO Refugee and Migrant Health Q&A](https://covid19.who.int)
(<https://covid19.who.int>)
- [MoPH Lebanon COVID-19 vaccination page](https://www.moph.gov.lb/en)
(www.moph.gov.lb/en)
- [WHO Lebanon website](https://www.who.int/ar)
(www.who.int/ar)

Sources

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20. Same source
21. National Health Sector Working Group meeting held on 27 October 2022



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