

# *Brazil encourages COVID-19 vaccinations before Carnival*

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**Application of COVID-19 tests in Brazil, Jan. 2023. | Photo: Twitter/ @portalnorte\_**

Brasilia, January 9 (RHC)-- President Lula da Silva's administration has announced that it will start a campaign to encourage COVID-19 vaccinations due to the circulation of new strains of the coronavirus.

In Brasilia, Health Surveillance Secretary Ethel Maciel said that the pandemic continues and "the level of vaccine coverage is quite worrying" since less than 50 percent of 210 million Brazilians have received three doses.

The expansion of coverage levels is urgent since one of the new variants was detected in November in a 54-year-old patient from the interior of the state of Sao Paulo.

The Lula administration will encourage vaccination starting next week to prevent the increase in the number of infections during Carnival, a festive season that brings millions of people to the streets at the end of February.

Over the last two months, the number of Coronavirus-related deaths and infections has increased in a country whose health system was weakened during the administration of Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2023). So far, Brazil has registered 36.4 million cases and 694,500 deaths.

Given that the health system has a deficit of vaccines for children under 12 years of age, the Lula administration will resume purchase negotiations with pharmaceutical companies. The COVID-19 vaccine will be included in the 2023 National Immunization Plan, which will provide the doses to citizens free of charge.

"Science returned to Brazil," Marciel said, emphasizing that her country will follow all the epidemiological recommendations provided by the World Health Organization (WHO).

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