



Covid-19 Delta Plus Variant

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Why in News

Recently, the **Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)**, has warned people against the new **Covid-19** strain '**Delta Plus**' (DP).

There is fear that this new variant **may spark the third wave of Covid-19**.

Key Points

- **About:**

- **Delta plus (B.1.617.2.1/(AY.1)) is a new variant of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus formed due to a mutation in the Delta strain of the virus (B.1.617.2 variant). It is technically the next generation of SARS-COV-2.**
- **This mutant of Delta was first detected in Europe in March 2021.**
 - The **Delta variant** that was **first detected in India (in February 2021)** eventually **became a huge problem** for the whole world. However, the **Delta Plus variant**, at present, is **limited to smaller areas** in the country.
- It is **resistant to monoclonal antibodies cocktail**. Since it's a new variant, its **severity is still unknown**.
- People **reported symptoms like** headaches, sore throats, runny noses, and fever.
- The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** is **tracking this variant** as part of the Delta variant, it is doing so for other **Variants of Concern** with additional mutations.

- **Transmissibility:**

- It has **acquired the spike protein mutation called K417N** which is also found in the Beta variant first identified in South Africa.
 - The spike protein is used by SARS-CoV-2, the virus which causes Covid-19, to enter the host cells.
- Some scientists fear that the mutation combined with other existing features of the Delta variant could make it more transmissible.

- **Major Concerns:**
 - Multiple studies are ongoing in India and globally **to test the effectiveness of vaccines against the Delta plus** Covid-19 mutation.
 - India's **health ministry warned** that regions where it has been found **"may need to enhance their public health response by focusing on surveillance, enhanced testing, quick contact-tracing, and priority vaccination."**
 - There are worries **Delta Plus would inflict another wave of infections on India** after it emerged from the world's worst surge in cases only recently.
 - Just **over 4% of Indians are fully vaccinated** and about **18% have received** one dose so far.

Virus Variant

- Variants of a virus have one or more **mutations** that **differentiate it from the other variants that are in circulation**. While most mutations are deleterious for the virus, some make it easier for the virus to survive.
- The **SARS-CoV-2** (Corona) virus is evolving fast because of the scale at which it has infected people around the world. High levels of circulation mean it is easier for the virus to change as it is able to replicate faster.
- The original pandemic virus (founder variant) was Wu.Hu.1 (Wuhan virus). In a few months, variant **D614G** emerged and became globally dominant.
- **Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics (INSACOG)** is a multi-laboratory, multi-agency, pan-India network **to monitor genomic variations in the SARS-CoV-2**.
- **Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID)** is a public platform started by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** in 2008 for countries to share **genome sequences**.
 - The GISAID Initiative **promotes the international sharing of all influenza virus sequences**, related clinical and epidemiological data associated with human viruses, and geographical as well as species-specific data associated with avian and other animal viruses.

Source: IE