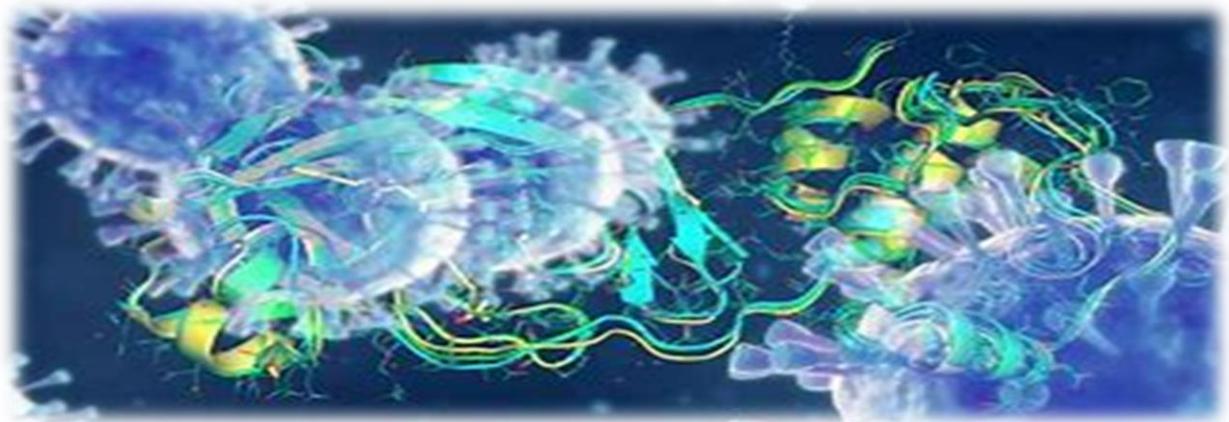
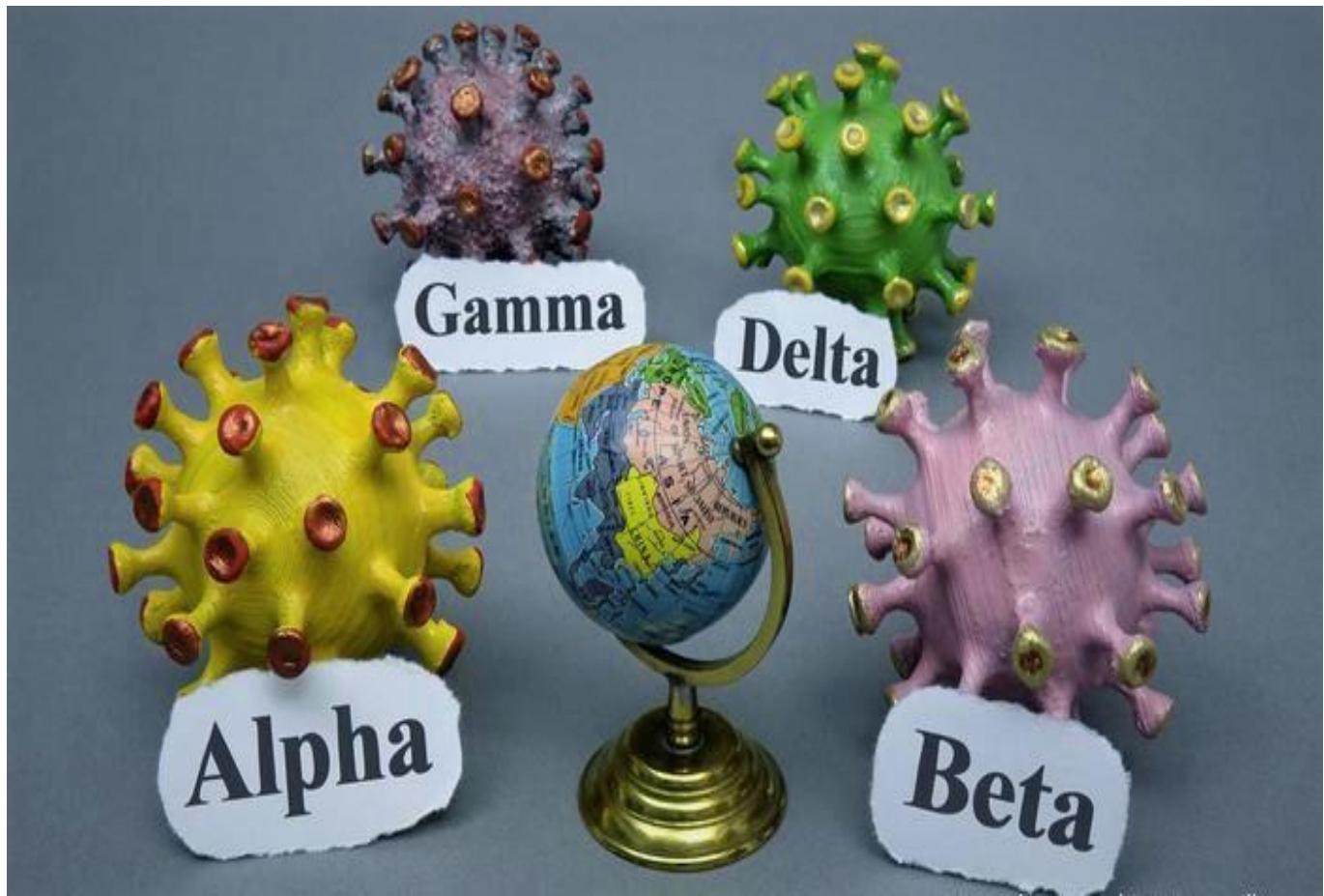


CORONAVIRUS NEWS BRIEF



*Compiled Periodically from various sources By:
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Pfizer says immunity can drop to 83% within four months in people who got its COVID-19 shot, further bolstering the company case for a booster



The effectiveness of Pfizer's COVID-19 shot can drop to 83.7% within four to six months after getting the second dose of its vaccine. This is the latest indication that vaccine-induced immunity to the virus can wane and some kind of boost may be necessary in the future. New research published Wednesday as a preprint indicates that the Pfizer Inc. shot provides 96.2% protection for the first two months, 90.1% effectiveness between the second and fourth months, & between 83.7% of protection for the fourth, fifth, and six months. "We will need a booster eight to 12 months from the second dose," Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla said Wednesday, according to a FactSet transcript of the company's second-quarter earnings call.

The drug maker has been making the case for booster shots, citing limited data from its own clinical research and real-world data out of Israel, where Pfizer's vaccine is the predominant shot in circulation.

"We do see—after six to eight months—more rapid waning concerning infections and mild to moderate symptoms," Dr. Mikhail Dolsten, Pfizer's chief scientific officer, said during the call. "Those are likely entirely, or to a large degree, dependent on antibodies and the drop in titer that we alluded to. If you raise it, you may have a good probability to reverse that waning."

Still, there's no simple black-and-white answer to whether booster shots are needed at this time.

One, there is no definitive data. The new Pfizer data is the most detailed so far, though the company plans to submit clinical data for a third dose to the Food and Drug Administration in early August.

When speaking to investors this week, company officials attributed waning immunity levels in Israel to the much earlier vaccination campaign that rolled out

in that country. (In fact, Israel announced Thursday that a third dose will now be available to people who are at least 60.) Pfizer also mentioned that there will be data in a few months coming out of the U.K., where doses were sometimes spaced out, that indicates "long-lasting protection."

In addition, we still don't know which people will need to boost their protection levels. Will the entire vaccinated population need a boost? What if third shots are only necessary for the elderly or people who are immunocompromised? What diagnostic test can be used to assess titer levels before giving a booster? How soon does this all need to happen?

"While I cannot predict with certainty the future, I would not be surprised if, similar to flu, that we would need...to boost our vaccine against COVID," Dolsten said. "Whether this will be on an annual [basis] or based on simple diagnostics that allow it to be boosted at the right time before your risk for infection is high, we need to monitor."

Either way, it's a boon for Pfizer, as the legacy drug maker shifts into its new role as a vaccine leader.

Pfizer is expected to generate \$33.5 billion in COVID-19 vaccine revenue this year, and Wall Street analysts have already baked boosters into their financial models for Pfizer and BioNTech SE which developed the vaccine with Pfizer.

"The largest remaining uncertainty is whether this third boost is simply the third dose in a three-vaccine schedule to achieve lasting, broad protection or is the first of a periodic (annual) boosted vaccine," SVB Leerink analysts told investors on Thursday.

Moderna Inc. which developed the other FDA-authorized mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccine, is also testing booster shots in clinical trials. It has been much quieter in its communication around a third shot. The company is scheduled to share second-quarter earnings on Aug. 5. Pfizer's stock is up 16.3% so far this year, while the broader S&P 500 has gained 17.1%.

US CORONAVIRUS: IF WE WANT KIDS BACK IN SCHOOL AND THE ECONOMY TO PROSPER, MORE OF THE US NEEDS TO GET VACCINATED, EXPERT SAYS

By Madeline Holcombe and Jason Hanna, CNN



First grade student Daniel Cano, 5, and his mom, Sonia Cano, walk past Covid-19 safety precaution, social distancing and hand washing signs at a L.A. Unified "meet and greet" with its medical advisers.

The United States is facing a pivotal moment in the coronavirus pandemic, given that the Delta variant is spurring surges in cases and hospitalizations: It must increase vaccinations or risk magnifying the impact, the surgeon general said.

"If we want to keep our kids in school, if we want to protect the economy, if we want our country to get through this pandemic, we have to leave no stone unturned in making sure people get vaccinated," US Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy told CNN's Anderson Cooper.

Murthy's comment came after President Joe Biden announced that federal employees must attest to being vaccinated against Covid-19 or face strict protocols, including testing once or twice a week, wearing a mask and other health mitigation measures.

On Friday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shared a new study that led to its new indoor mask guidance, showing the Delta variant produced similar amounts of virus in both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals if they get infected.

"High viral loads suggest an increased risk of transmission and raised concern that, unlike with other variants, vaccinated people infected with Delta can

transmit the virus," said CDC director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said in a statement Friday.

The finding "was a pivotal discovery leading to CDC's updated mask recommendation," Walensky said.

Walensky defended the agency's guidance on wearing masks in schools Friday evening, telling Fox News it was necessary to protect kids, their families and communities.

"Right now the best way to (prevent outbreaks in schools) is to have everybody masked because we do have disease in the community," she said. "And hopefully as we have vaccinations for kids, and less disease in the community, we'll be able to scale back on the mask wearing."

Also emerging late this week: The Delta variant appears to cause more severe illness and spread as easily as chickenpox, according to an internal document from the CDC.

The document -- a slide presentation first reported by The Washington Post -- outlines unpublished data that shows fully vaccinated people, even if they don't get sick, might spread the Delta variant at the same rate as unvaccinated people.

Meanwhile, coronavirus case rates have jumped as the Delta variant has increased its grip in the United States. The US averaged more than 66,900 new daily cases over the last week -- an average that's generally risen since the country hit a 2021 low of 11,299 daily cases on June 22.

Hospitalizations have also risen. More than 39,000 Covid-19 patients were in US hospitals on Monday -- a number that's generally risen since a 2021 low of nearly 15,988 on June 27, according to Department of Health and Human Services data.

Data shows a difference between areas with high and low vaccination rates. Average hospitalization rates are nearly three times higher in states that have fully vaccinated less than half of their residents compared

with those that have vaccinated more than half of their residents, according to a analysis of federal data. And Covid-19 case and death rates over the past week are more than twice as high among states that have vaccinated less than half of their residents, on average. With only 49.5% of Americans fully vaccinated, former US Surgeon General Dr. Jerome Adams said Thursday that he anticipates more closures as the Delta variant keeps spreading. And with some mask and vaccine mandates already implemented, Murthy anticipates more will be added.

"The private sector is already stepping up to create verification systems," Murthy said. "What we are going to see more and more, Anderson, in the weeks and months ahead is, I believe, we're going to see more universities, more hospitals, more businesses, more retail establishments looking to put rules in place to require people to get vaccinated."

CDC document on Delta variant: **'The war has changed'**

The study released by the CDC described 469 **Massachusetts** residents infected in a July outbreak in Barnstable County, which includes Provincetown. No deaths were reported among the residents.

About 74%, or 346 cases, had been fully vaccinated. Of those, 79% reported symptoms. Genetically sequenced cases revealed the Delta variant as the main culprit. Meanwhile, the internal CDC document that said the variant appears to cause more severe infection advises that the agency should "acknowledge the war has changed." It recommends vaccine mandates and universal mask requirements.

The CDC director confirmed the authenticity of the document. "I think people need to understand that we're not crying wolf here. This is serious," Walensky told CNN.

The document says the Delta variant is about as transmissible as chickenpox, with each infected person, on average, infecting eight or nine others. The original lineage was about as transmissible as the common cold, with each infected person passing the virus to about two other people on average.

NC school system to require masks indoors

One of the most contentious issues across the country surrounds wearing face coverings in schools. Several

areas announced Friday they would require or recommend masks, while Florida's governor, while signing an executive order, again said parents should make the decisions.

In North Carolina's most populous area, Mecklenburg County, which includes Charlotte, the school board voted for masks to be worn indoors.

"This decision aligns with local and state guidance, as well as national guidelines, which address the Delta variants of (coronavirus)," said Elyse Dashew, chairperson of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Board of Education, according to CNN affiliate WSOC. "The infection numbers in our county are cause for serious concern -- and significant precautions to protect our students and staff."

Only one of the board's nine members voted against the measure.

In Massachusetts, schools will meet five days a week for in-person learning and masks are recommended for some people.

The state's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education said all students on buses should wear a face covering. It also recommended students in kindergarten through sixth grade should wear masks as should unvaccinated students in higher grades and all unvaccinated staff members.

In Kentucky, Gov. Andy Beshear urged schools to implement mask mandates for the upcoming academic year. Beshear said that schools who do not mandate masks "will fail, and it will be the students who lose out on in-person learning that they would otherwise be in, and it's unprotected parents and grandparents that may pay a bigger price." Kentucky's Department of Health, in light of the CDC's new guidance, recommends all people inside schools wear masks.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has issued an executive order with emergency rules that prevent the implementation of mask mandates in schools. DeSantis, who has been a vocal critic against the CDC's recommendations for masking in schools, doubled down on his position, stating there will be no lockdowns, school closures, restrictions, or mandates in his state. The order was issued "to protect parents' freedom to choose whether their children wear masks," the governor said in a news release.

The executive order says the CDC's guidance "lacks a well-grounded scientific justification" while referring to a Brown University study the governor says found no correlation with Covid-19 data from schools and mask mandates. After Miami-Dade County Public Schools announced it will reconsider its mask-optional policy, DeSantis, through his press secretary, hinted at calling a special session of the state Legislature to protect children against mask mandates.

"Many school boards are making the decision to go mask-optional, which is the right decision from our perspective. However, if Miami-Dade County Public Schools does decide to mandate masks, I'd just refer you back to Governor DeSantis' comments from the literacy presser last week: He hinted that the state legislature could do a special session to ensure a normal, mask-optional school year," spokesperson Christina Pushaw said in a statement.

Superintendent Alberto M. Carvalho said the district will announce its final decision on masks about two weeks before school starts on August 23.

Doctor: 'We're becoming victims of the unvaccinated'
Some states are seeing consequences unfold.

In Louisiana, a Baton Rouge medical center said that because it needs to divert staff to treat a crush of Covid-19 patients, it is de-prioritizing other care.

Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center said this week it halted the scheduling of non-urgent surgical procedures that would require a patient stay.

"We're becoming victims of the unvaccinated," Dr. Christopher Thomas, a critical care physician at the medical center. "We currently are overwhelming our bed capacity. We're creating burnout for our teams. And honestly, we're beginning to impact the health care of the rest of the community," he said.

About 140 Covid-19 patients were at Our Lady of the Lake as of Thursday, 30 of whom had been admitted over the previous 24 hours -- the most since the pandemic began, according to a hospital spokesperson. About 97% of the hospital's intensive-care patients Friday morning were unvaccinated, Thomas said.

Louisiana's vaccination rate is among the lowest in the country, with just 37% of residents fully vaccinated as of Thursday, according to CDC data.

In Hawaii, the governor is considering travel restrictions. Since last month, travelers who are fully vaccinated have been able to take domestic flights to Hawaii without having to be tested for the coronavirus, with no restrictions between islands. The state went into a virtual travel lockdown in the early weeks of the Covid pandemic, costing the state hundreds of millions of dollars in tourism revenue.

State health director Dr. Libby Char said cases are rising and Gov. David Ige said it might be necessary to limit travel. "I can assure you, at the point that I believe the hospitals have more patients than they would be able to handle, then we would take specific actions to restrict movements again," Ige said.

(Editor's note:

Please use your common sense to donate to the right organization. If possible, give priority to your own family, neighbors and your village/Town or area healthcare systems directly. There are fraudulent organizations be aware of them. Verify the need and response to those priorities. Get some advice from your Doctors or helping organizations. Many time Cash Donations are more effective than kind. I would recommend donating to Red Cross of India, UNICEF, Oxfam India, and Care India. In my personal opinion, do not send any contributions to India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi's PM Care Fund as its not transparent and has no accountability.

-Kaushik Amin.)

'WAR HAS CHANGED:'

CDC SAYS DELTA AS CONTAGIOUS AS CHICKEN POX

By **Damian McNamara**



Internal CDC documents support the high transmission rate of the Delta variant and put the risk in easier-to-understand terms. The documents also show that breakthrough infections in the vaccinated make people nearly as contagious as those who are unvaccinated. In addition, the agency released a new outbreak study that shows that breakthrough infections in the vaccinated make people about as contagious as those who are unvaccinated.

The new report, published today in *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, also reveals the delta variant likely causes more severe COVID-19 illness. Given these recent findings, the internal CDC slideshow advises that the agency should "acknowledge the war has changed."

A 'Pivotal Discovery'

CDC Director Rochelle Walensky, MD, MPH, said in a statement today that the MMWR report demonstrates "that delta infection resulted in similarly high SARS-CoV-2 viral loads in vaccinated and unvaccinated people."

"High viral loads suggest an increased risk of transmission and raised concern that, unlike with other variants, vaccinated people infected with delta can transmit the virus," she added. "This finding is concerning and was a pivotal discovery leading to CDC's updated [mask recommendation](#)."

The report investigators analyzed 469 COVID-19 cases reported in Massachusetts residents July 3 -17, 2021. The infections were associated with an outbreak following multiple events and large gatherings in

Provincetown in that state's easternmost Barnstable County, also known as Cape Cod.

Notably, 346 infections or 74% of the cases occurred in fully vaccinated individuals. This group had a median age of 42 and 87% were male. Also, 79% of the breakthrough infections were symptomatic.

Researchers also identified the delta variant in 90% of 133 specimens collected for analysis. Furthermore, viral loads were about the same between samples taken from people who were fully vaccinated and those who were not.

Four of the five people hospitalized were fully vaccinated. No deaths were reported. The publication of these results was highly anticipated following the CDC's updated recommendations.

Outside the scope of the MMWR report is the total number of cases associated with the outbreak, including visitors from outside Massachusetts, which now approach [900 infections](#), NBC Boston reported.

'Very Sobering' Data

"The new information from the CDC around the delta variant is very sobering," David Hirschwerk, MD, infectious disease specialist at Northwell Health in New Hyde Park.

"The CDC is trying to convey and present this uncertain situation clearly to the public based on new, accumulated data," he said. For example, given the evidence for higher contagiousness of the delta variant, Hirschwerk added, "there will be situations where vaccinated people get infected, because the amount of the virus overwhelms the immune protection,"

"What is new that is concerning is that people who are vaccinated still have the potential to transmit the virus to the same degree," he said.

Today's MMWR study "helps us better understand the question related to whether or not person who has completed a COVID-19 series can spread the infection," agreed Michelle Barron, MD, a professor in the division of infectious disease at the University of Colorado School of Medicine in Aurora.

"The message is that because the delta variant is much more contagious than the original strain, that unvaccinated persons need to get vaccinated because it is nearly impossible to avoid the virus indefinitely," Michael Lin, MD, MPH, infectious diseases specialist

and epidemiologist at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, said when asked to comment.

Furthermore, Lin added, "This new data highlights that vaccinated persons, if they become sick, should still seek COVID-19 testing and should still isolate, as they are likely contagious."

More Contagious Than Other Infections

The internal CDC slide presentation also puts the new transmission risk in simple terms. Saying the Delta variant is about as contagious as chicken pox, for example, immediately brings back vivid memories for some of staying indoors and away from friends during childhood or teenage outbreaks.

"A lot of people will remember getting chicken pox and then having their siblings get it shortly thereafter," Barron said.

"The only key thing to note is that this does not mean that COVID-19 delta variant mechanism of spread is the same as chickenpox and Ebola," she added. "The primary means of spread of COVID-19, even the Delta variant, is via droplets."

This also means each person infected with the Delta variant could infect an average of eight or nine others. In contrast, the original strain of the coronavirus was about as infectious as the common cold. In other words, someone was likely to infect about two other people on average.

In addition to the cold, the CDC notes that the Delta variant is now more contagious than Ebola, the seasonal flu, or smallpox. These comparisons are one tangible way of explaining why the CDC on Tuesday recommended a [return to masking](#) in schools and other indoor spaces for people, vaccinated and unvaccinated – in about 70% of the counties across the US.

In comparing the delta variant to other infections, "I think the CDC is trying to help people understand a little bit better the situation we now face since the information is so new. We are in a very different position now than just a few weeks ago, and it is hard for people to accept this," Hirschwerk said.

The Delta variant is so different that the CDC considers it is almost acting like a [new virus altogether](#). The CDC internal documents were first released by *The Washington Post* on Thursday. The slides cite communication challenges for the agency – to continue promoting vaccination while also acknowledging that breakthrough cases are occurring and therefore the fully vaccinated, in some instances, are likely infecting others.

Trust but Verify

Moving back to science talk, the CDC used a recent outbreak in Barnstable County, MA, as an example. The cycle thresholds, or Ct values, which measure viral

load, were about the same between 80 people linked to the Provincetown Fourth of July outbreak, who had an average Ct value of 21.9, compared to 65 other unvaccinated people with a Ct of 21.5.

Many experts are quick to note that vaccination remains essential – in part because a vaccinated person also walks around with a much lower risk for severe outcomes, hospitalization, and death. In the internal slide show, the CDC points out that vaccination reduces the risk of infection 3-fold.

"Even with this high amount of virus, [the delta variant] did not necessarily make the vaccinated individuals as sick," Barron said.

In her statement, Walensky credited collaboration with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Public Health and CD for the new data. She also thanked the residents of Barnstable County for participating in interviews done by contact tracers and their willingness to get tested and adhere to safety protocols after learning of their exposure.

Next Moves by CDC?

The agency notes next steps for the agency that includes possible measures including vaccine mandates for health care professionals to protect vulnerable populations and universal masking for source control and prevention.

Asked if this potential policy is appropriate and feasible, Lin said, "Yes, I believe that every person working in healthcare should be vaccinated for COVID-19, and it is feasible."

Barron agreed as well. "We as healthcare providers choose to work in healthcare, and we should be doing everything feasible to ensure that we are protecting our patients and keeping our co-workers safe."

"Whether you are a healthcare professional or not, I would urge everyone to get the COVID-19 vaccine, especially as cases across the country continue to rise," Hirschwerk said. "Unequivocally vaccines protect you from the virus."

With the recent increase of Covid-19 infections and hospitalizations due to the spread of the highly transmissible Delta variant, health experts and officials expect the surge to worsen as long as large segments of the country remain unvaccinated.

"We will see this big, steep acceleration," Dr. Peter Hotez, co-director for the Center for Vaccine Development at Texas Children's Hospital, USA told. "As bad as things are right now in the South, they are about to get worse for lots of unvaccinated individuals." Officials in Southern states, where vaccination rates have generally lagged other parts of the country, are working to get the message out.

How do new variants emerge?



Scientists from different research institutes, including the Hyderabad-based Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, National Centre for Disease Control, New Delhi and IIT Jodhpur, said the novel coronavirus undergoes changes in the body of an infected person and once it's done, it infects new people carrying the changes with it.

This results in the emergence of new variants. The research study found that about 80% of the genomes sequenced in individuals had later emerged as new variants or strains.

The researchers analyzed samples of Covid patients from two different time-periods of the pandemic. In phase 1, the team analyzed 1,347 samples collected by June 2020 from China, Germany, Malaysia, UK, US and different subpopulations of India to perceive a genome-wide intrahost single nucleotide variation (iSNV) map in Covid-19 patients. Single nucleotide variation (SNV) is a substitution of a nucleotide (a basic building block of nucleic acid or genetic material) for another.

The team observed 18,146 iSNV sites spanning the viral genome, including residues that defined the B.1 and B.6 lineages of the virus that were prominent in the listed populations before June 2020.

"Interestingly, 41% of all unique iSNVs identified in these samples were found to be reported as an single nucleotide variation (SNV) by Sept. 30, 2020 in one or more samples submitted in GISAID, increasing to about 80% by Jun. 30, 2021. The likelihood that iSNVs can overtime manifest into SNVs in populations was further substantiated in phase 2 by analyzing 1,798

samples sequenced in India between November 2020 and May 2021," the researchers said.

US to maintain travel restrictions due to Delta variant

The US will keep existing travel restrictions for those entering the country due to the surging cases of Covid-19 Delta variant, the White House said on Monday.

Driven by the rising Delta variant cases here at home, particularly among those who are unvaccinated, "we will maintain existing travel restrictions at this point," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters at a daily briefing, Xinhua news agency reported.

The federal administration has been under pressure from the travel industry and allies to lift these restrictions. The US currently bars entry for most non-citizens who within the last 14 days have been in Britain, the European Schengen area, Ireland, China, Iran, South Africa, Brazil, and India. It also keeps non-essential travel restrictions across its borders with Canada and Mexico.

Last week, the US State Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a warning against travelling to Britain due to the country's high level of Covid-19 cases.

Millions face eviction as Congress' last-minute effort to extend moratorium falls short:

A federal eviction moratorium is set to expire Saturday at midnight after a full day of scrambling in Congress on Friday to extend the deadline — with the policy sunset, along with a failure to provide desperately needed emergency rental aid, putting millions of Americans at risk of losing their homes.

The news also comes just as the delta COVID-19 variant continues to vex public health efforts across the country.

Congressional Democrats blasted the White House — which waited until Thursday to announce that it would not attempt to extend the program due to potential legal challenges — for providing insufficient notice ahead of the deadline. Speaker Nancy Pelosi released statement Friday, saying her caucus had really "only learned about this yesterday." Others were more pointed.

Florida coronavirus cases jump 50% in one week



Signage stands at the ready (foreground) in case COVID-19 testing at Barnett Park reaches capacity, as cars wait in line in Orlando, Fla., Thursday, July 29, 2021. The line stretched through the park for more than a mile out to West Colonial Drive near the Central Florida Fairgrounds. Orange County is under a state of emergency as coronavirus infections skyrocket in Central Florida. The Barnett Park site is testing 1,000 people a day and has closed early in recent days due to capacity limits. (Joe Burbank/Orlando Sentinel via AP) Joe Burbank/AP

Florida's coronavirus cases jumped 50% this week, the state Health Department reported Friday, continuing a six-week surge that has seen it responsible for 1 in 5 new infections nationally, becoming the outbreak's epicenter.

The release came shortly after Gov. Ron DeSantis barred school districts from requiring students to wear masks when classes resume next month.

More than 110,000 new coronavirus cases were reported statewide over the past week, up from 73,000 last week and 11 times the 10,000 reported the week of June 11, six weeks ago. Case numbers are now back to where they were in January, just before vaccinations became widely available.

The Florida Hospital Association also said Friday that statewide COVID-19 hospitalizations are nearing last year's peak. More than 9,300 patients are hospitalized, up from 1,845 a month ago and nearing the record 10,179 set on July 23, 2020. On a per capita basis, Florida now has more people hospitalized than any other state. The state reported 409 deaths this week, bringing the total to more than 39,000 since its first in March 2020. The state's peak happened in mid-August 2020 when 1,266 people died over a seven-day period. Deaths usually follow increases in hospitalizations by a few weeks. DeSantis has blamed the surge on a seasonal increase — more Floridians are indoors

because of the hot weather with air conditioning circulating the virus. About 60% of Floridians 12 and older are vaccinated, ranking it about midway among the states.

DeSantis said his executive order barring mask mandates at schools will improve students' experience and make it easier for them to focus on learning.

"I have (three) young kids. My wife and I are not going to do the mask with the kids. We never have; we won't. I want to see my kids smiling. I want them having fun," DeSantis said at a news conference in southwest Florida a few hours before he signed the executive order. DeSantis is seeking reelection next year and has been positioning himself nationally for a possible 2024 presidential bid. DeSantis also contended there is no evidence masks prevent outbreaks at schools, which is at odds with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidelines recommending "universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status." His critics say his unwillingness to mandate mask-wearing endangers the health of students and staff. "We know that masks are a simple and effective way to help prevent virus spread, and from a medical perspective it makes absolutely zero sense to discourage their use," said Dr. Bernard Ashby, head of Florida's progressive Committee to Protect Health

Care. "DeSantis' power grab will put the health of kids and teachers alike at risk."

DeSantis' decision came after the Broward County school board voted to require masks and other districts and colleges across the state were considering it.

"We will have to change our policy," Broward board member Debbi Hixon told the South Florida SunSentinel. "I am not looking to defy the governor. I believe it is an irresponsible decision but if it is the law, I will agree to follow it."

The Florida Education Association, the state's teachers union, said DeSantis should leave the decision to local officials rather than impose a statewide edict — a position he once held. When the pandemic began in March 2020, DeSantis said local officials should control the response, that the business closures and mask mandates imposed in Miami, Tampa, and other big cities wouldn't work in small, rural counties.

"Gov. DeSantis continues to think that Tallahassee knows best what all Floridians need," union President Andrew Spar said in a statement. "We reject that kind of thinking. Instead, we ask Gov. DeSantis to allow all Florida's citizens to have a voice by empowering the elected leaders of cities, counties, and school districts to make health and safety decisions locally."

Meanwhile, Publix, the state's largest supermarket chain, announced Friday that employees will again be required to wear masks and several hospitals said they are postponing elective surgeries and limiting visitors.

At Tampa General Hospital, the 90-plus patient hospitalized with COVID-19 already exceeds the previous high of 86, said Dr. Seetha Lakshmi, medical director of its Global Emerging Diseases Institute. She said the hospital, like many, can't hire enough staff and it is leaving those working exhausted.

"It feels like we are getting hit by a train, the pace is so fast and uncontrolled," Laskshmi said. "I just don't have any words anymore. This is awful, just awful and it is going to be awful."

She said last year, her patients' median age was in the 70s. Now, it is just over 50, with the younger patients getting sicker than in the past.

She pointed to a patient in his early 30s whose lungs "sound like Velcro" being pulled apart. A father of young children, he will likely have permanent damage and might need a transplant eventually, she said.

She said 83% of Tampa General's COVID-19 patients are unvaccinated while the others have immune-deficiency issues that prevented the vaccine from working.

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CORONAVIRUS: NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD:

* Why Is The Delta Variant More Contagious? Should You Still Get Vaccinated? Dr. Max Gomez Answers The Latest COVID Questions:

New information about the **Delta variant** is causing some confusion and raising a lot of questions.

Dr. Max Gomez answered some common questions.

Our first question is why is the **Delta variant** so much more contagious than previous strains?

The Delta variant is a mutation that developed several characteristics to make it far more transmissible than the original Wuhan and U.K. Alpha strains.

It appears that Delta is 50% more contagious than Alpha, and Alpha was 50% more contagious than the original Wuhan strain.

That's partly because Delta is able to get into your cells easier, and so an infected person harbors 1,000 times more virus copies in their respiratory tract than other variants, so you're going to shed much more virus, making Delta as infectious as chickenpox.

Next question comes from new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data. ***The data shows even fully vaccinated people can get breakthrough infections with Delta, so should you still get vaccinated?***

Short answer: yes!

While vaccines are somewhat less effective at preventing infections with Delta compared with earlier strains of the virus, they will still protect strongly against severe disease and death. Present vaccines also protect well against other strains that are still circulating. And finally, should you avoid large public gatherings or going away with unvaccinated family on vacations? Sadly, based on detailed epidemiology from a mass Fourth of July party in Providence, Rhode Island, it seems that the answer is probably yes. ***Because people infected with the Delta variant carry and shed much higher viral loads, even brief, fleeting exposure to Delta can be risky, especially since Delta seems to be able to get into our cells more easily.***

The fact remains that masks reduce the transmission of any coronavirus strains and that vaccines reduce the amount of virus circulating in the population, which in turn reduces the potential for still more variants to pop up and prolong this pandemic.

***CDC: COVID-19 outbreak among 346 fully vaccinated people shows those 'infected with Delta can transmit the virus'**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a study on Friday which suggests that fully

vaccinated people can transmit the Delta variant of the coronavirus just as easily as the unvaccinated - a find that may change the calculus of what's safe for vaccinated people to do, now that the Delta variant is responsible for more than 80% of US cases.



"Unlike with other variants, vaccinated people infected with Delta can transmit the virus," CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said in a statement released alongside the new report.

The study is a big part of the reason why the CDC changed its guidance for vaccinated people on Tuesday, saying that where COVID-19 transmission is substantial or high, vaccinated people should mask up again indoors in public.

Delta was responsible for at least 90% of the cases in this outbreak, according to viral sequencing. It didn't matter much which shots vaccinated people with Delta infections got, but the most common symptoms - including cough, headache, and sore throat - were mild.

* COVID-19 cases surge in Sydney, police cordon off downtown to prevent rally.



New South Wales, Australia's most populous state, reported 210 locally acquired cases of COVID-19 on Saturday, as police cordoned off downtown Sydney with multiple checkpoints to prevent a planned anti-lockdown protest. Sydney and its vicinities have been under a weeks-long strict lockdown that is to last at least until the end of August while battling an outbreak of the highly infectious Delta variant. Saturday's numbers bring the outbreak to 3,190 cases. About

1,000 police officers have been deployed around Sydney to prevent an unauthorized demonstration against the lockdown and the police have been issuing prohibition notices to taxi and rideshare services banning them from taking passengers to demonstrations, the NSW police said.

Protests last weekend resulted in a series of arrests and clashes with police.

A late-July poll by the NSW-based market research firm Utting Research showed, however, that only 7% of the people support the demonstrations. Compliance with public health rules has been one of the key cited reasons behind Australia's success in managing the pandemic. In Sydney, there are 198 people in the hospital, 53 of them in intensive care and 27 requiring ventilation, NSW Health Minister Brad Hazzard said. There was also one death reported, bringing the total number of deaths in the outbreak to 14.

Parts of the neighboring state Queensland will enter into a three-day snap lockdown on Saturday after the state recorded six new coronavirus cases of the Delta strain, putting a number of football, rugby and other sporting events into a limbo.

"We have seen from the experience in other states that the only way to beat the Delta strain is to move quickly, to be fast and to be strong," the state's Deputy Premier Steven Miles said. "That is now the nationally agreed approach."

Despite its struggle with spikes of infections, mostly of the Delta variant, Australia has managed to keep its epidemic largely under control with a total of just over 34,000 cases and 924 deaths.

(Reporting by Lidia Kelly, Editing by Raju Gopalakrishnan)

***Australia's third-largest city of Brisbane to enter Covid lockdown.**



Australia's third-largest city of Brisbane and other parts of Queensland state will enter a snap Covid-19 lockdown from Saturday as authorities race to contain an emerging outbreak of the Delta strain.

Millions of residents in the city and several other areas will be placed under stay-at-home orders from

Saturday afternoon for three days, state Deputy Premier Steven Miles said.

"The only way to beat the Delta strain is to move quickly, to be fast and to be strong," Miles said.

Six new cases were reported Saturday in a cluster of the Delta variant initially linked to a school student, resulting in pupils and teachers at two schools being placed into isolation.

Genome sequencing had connected the cluster to returned overseas travellers in hotel quarantine but the exact source of transmission remained unclear, Chief Health Officer Jeannette Young said.

In the "strictest lockdown" the city has enforced, residents will only be allowed to leave their homes for essential reasons, including buying groceries and exercising. Brisbane's snap lockdown comes as Australia's largest city of Sydney and its surroundings completed a fifth week of lockdown, with authorities struggling to stop the spread of a Delta variant outbreak there.

"We cannot afford to be complacent just because we have done so well so far. We all we have to comply with these restrictions," Miles said.

Sydney recorded 210 new local cases on Saturday, slightly down from the record number reached earlier in the week. Police were out in force around the city, attempting to prevent anti-lockdown protesters from gathering after thousands poured through the streets and sparked violent clashes with officers last week.

With close to just 14 percent of the population fully vaccinated, authorities around the country continue to rely on lockdowns to reduce people's movements and slow the spread of the virus.

On Friday, the country's Prime Minister Scott Morrison outlined a long road out of restrictions -- setting a target of 80 percent of the population to be fully vaccinated before the government would reopen borders and end lockdowns.

***Greg Abbott signs Texas order stopping mask and COVID vaccine mandates:**

Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed an executive order on Thursday night banning mask and COVID-19 vaccination mandates to promote 'individual right and responsibility' in the Lone Star State.

Abbott, 63, announced the executive order in a press release just hours after Biden called on states to do more to incentivize vaccination. 'The new Executive Order emphasizes that the path forward relies on personal responsibility rather than government mandates.'

* **Kerala**, India, continues to record a high number of cases even when the rest of the country's graph has tapered off. Dr. Rajeev Jayadevan, vice-chairman, research cell, Kerala State IMA, tells Preetu Nair of 'Times Of India' what Kerala's Covid numbers mean, and what it portends for the rest of the country.

Q. A surge in Covid cases has forced a complete lock down. Are we seeing the start of a third wave?

A. Unlike the rest of India, Kerala's Covid wave graph has been different and it has had multiple waves since the onset of Covid. The concept of an impending third wave is a simplistic one, which is helpful for mass education, but not accurate at a regional level. The pandemic affects different parts of a country differently. Kerala is at present going past its third wave. It had two waves in 2020 which was a small initial wave with the rest of the nation in April 2020, and then a moderate spike in October followed by another spike in January. The large 4th spike that occurred in May 2021 coincided with the arrival of the Delta variant. As the virus remains in the community, there will be continued ups and downs, depending on multiple factors including social behavior as well as genetic variations.

Q. Is the case in Kerala symbolic of what we may see in the rest of India?

A. Pandemic spread is stochastic by nature, like mould growing on a slice of bread. It doesn't affect all regions in the same manner. India is a large country with a diversity of geography, weather, population, culture, healthcare access and infrastructure; it is impossible to generalize.

Q. A recent serosurvey showed that only 44% of Kerala's population has been infected, leaving a larger part susceptible to the coronavirus. By the same logic, does the rest of rural India need to worry about a new wave of infections?

A. Kerala's well-established public health infrastructure and effective grassroots level communication, along with relatively good compliance of the general public, helped reduce the overall spread of the virus and, hence, the low seroprevalence. This cannot be generalized for all parts of the country.

Q. Though Kerala accounts for about half of India's new cases today, it has one of the lowest case fatality ratios? Why is that?

A. It is a faulty interpretation of statistics to claim that half of India's cases are in Kerala. There is a famous quote: 'There are lies, damned lies, and then there are statistics'. In other words, reported numbers can sometimes be used to convey the wrong message.

Unlike an absolute number, a percentage is essentially a statement. Such a statement can only be made if all

states had exactly the same healthcare infrastructure and testing/case-finding ability that Kerala has. It is an established fact that Kerala's case-finding ability is 5 times the national average, and multiple times the capacity of several states that are currently reporting low numbers. In other words, underreporting of cases from other states will artificially reduce the denominator of this fraction.

Case fatality or mortality rate of Covid-19 is determined by the availability of medical care to those who are in the moderately or severely sick category. If healthcare facilities are overwhelmed, mortality will be much higher, even in wealthy countries. Kerala has not had to face such a situation, hence the mortality is low.

Q. Given that even fully vaccinated people are getting infected, what role will vaccination play in the spread of the infection?

A. There is no doubt that the virus is spreading silently within homes and at the workplace through social contacts, often among people with limited symptoms but high viral loads. This occurs even among the fully vaccinated. It is difficult to limit this in such closed settings because of a shortened incubation period and high viral load which spreads even before symptoms appear. It is impossible to ask apparently well people to wear masks all the time when they are at home, in the company of their near and dear.

***Covid infection from banknotes, coins unlikely: Study.:**



While the fear of getting Covid infection from banknotes and coins has driven much more contactless payments during the pandemic, researchers say the risk is far too less.

Experts at the European Central Bank, in collaboration with researchers at Ruhr-Universitat Bochum in Germany, wanted to clarify how long do coronaviruses remain infectious on banknotes and coins? Is it possible to become infected through contact with cash? The team treated various euro coins and banknotes with virus solutions of different concentrations and over several days observed how long infectious virus was still detectable. A stainless-steel surface served as a control in each case.

While infectious virus was still present on the stainless-steel surface after seven days, on the 10-euro banknote, it took only three days to completely disappear. For the 10-cent, 1-euro, and 5-cent coins after six days, two days and one hour, respectively, no infectious virus was detectable.

"The rapid decline on the 5-cent piece is because it's made of copper, on which viruses are known to be less stable," explained Daniel Todt, from the varsity's Department of Molecular and Medical Virology.

The study was published in the journal *iScience*.

The researchers also developed a new method to study how well the virus is transferred from a surface to the fingertip. They contaminated banknotes, coins and credit-card-like PVC plates with harmless coronaviruses and, under high-security conditions, also with SARS-CoV-2.

These surfaces were then touched, while still wet or when already dried, by test subjects with their fingertips or, in the case of SARS-CoV-2, with artificial skin. Cell cultures were then inoculated with the viruses adhering to the fingertips. This allowed the researchers to determine the number of transmitted virus particles that were still infectious.

"We saw that immediately after the liquid had dried, there was practically no transmission of infectious virus," Todt said. "Under realistic conditions, infection with SARS-CoV-2 from cash is very unlikely," he added. Smear infections via surfaces are almost non-existent. The current study was conducted with the Alpha variant of SARS-CoV-2 in addition to the wild-type variant. "We assume that other variants, such as the currently predominant Delta variant, also behave similarly," said Eike Steinmann, Professor at the varsity.

****Tokyo Sets New Daily COVID Record after Cases More Than Doubled in First Week of Olympics***

Tokyo set a new daily record for COVID-19 cases on Saturday, after infections more than doubled during the first week of the city hosting the summer Olympic Games. On Saturday, city officials said at least 4,058 people tested positive for COVID-19, marking the highest its been since the pandemic first began. The new record comes just days after Tokyo reported a 229 percent rise on its daily case count during the first week of the Olympics.

To prevent the virus from spreading across the Games, Olympic athletes and staff members are getting tested for the coronavirus every day. On Saturday, 21 people working at the Olympics, but no athletes, tested positive for the virus. In total, there have been 241

positive tests reported within the Games, 23 of which were athletes.

Earlier this week, Mark Adams, a spokesman for the International Olympic Committee (IOC), described the Games as the "most tested community almost anywhere in the world," and said that there is no evidence to suggest that athletes or anyone from the Olympics have spread the virus to the general public in Tokyo, *The New York Times* reported.

Nonetheless, COVID-19 cases in the host city have not stopped rising despite government restrictions and a lack of spectators allowed inside the Olympic venues. Only 1,359 cases were recorded in the city when the Games first started on July 31, a number that has nearly increased three-fold in just over one week.

Now that cases continue to set new daily records, local health authorities reportedly anticipate virus case tallies to peak in first week of August, before the Games are set to end on August 8.

The Games have long been a controversial topic, as critics have said that Tokyo should cancel or postpone the event as virus cases continue to rise around the world. On opening day, hundreds of demonstrators took to the streets to protest the games, accusing Tokyo of being "greedy" and "selfish" for hosting the event at this time.

But last week, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga dismissed the possibility of canceling the Olympics halfway through as a response to the rising case count, which has largely been linked to the more infectious Delta variant first detected in India last year.

"The flow of people is decreasing. There's no worry," Suga told reporters following a meeting with cabinet officials on the day, according to Japan's *Jiji Press*. The prime minister urged the public to remain at home where possible.

"More people in their 40s and 50s are being hospitalized, and the Delta strain is spreading quickly," Kyodo News quoted Suga as saying. "We are maintaining a strong sense of caution as we work with local governments to curb infections," he added.

Japan has recorded more than 915,000 COVID-19 cases and 15,000 deaths since the pandemic began. Only about one-quarter of the country's more than 120m population is fully vaccinated.

Daily reported cases on Saturday also reached records in areas neighboring Tokyo, including the Saitama, Chiba and Kanagawa prefectures. *Newsweek* contacted the Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare for additional comment, but did not hear back in time for publication.

COVID19: Weekly Update.

The numbers below are from
Saturday 07-31-2021 * 12pm US East coast Time...

Compiled Periodically By:

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There are likely false data & variations in data most of the time, so,

Please use the data wisely.

Details are compiled from various sources.

Marked "" are not reliable data.*

World:

198,259,318. Cases. / 4,229,249. Deaths.

Recovered till today:

179,108,567.

01. U.S. A.:

35,689, 184. Cases. /629,072. Deaths.

02. India*(**?)**

31,619, 573. Cases. / 423,965. Deaths.

03. Brazil:

19,880,273. Cases. /555,512. Deaths.

06. UK:

5,856,528. Cases. /129,654. Deaths.

25. Canada.

1,430,483. Cases. /26,592. Deaths.

00 (India): Gujarat* :(???)

824,877.(???) Cases. /10,076. (???) Deaths.

USA States:

01. California:

3,956,305. Cases./ 64,420. Deaths

02. Texas*:

3,133,363. Cases. /53,446. Deaths.

03. Florida:

2,614,383. Cases / 38,971. Deaths.

04. New York:*

2,210,612. Cases / 54,232. Deaths.

05. Illinois:

1,419,611. Cases. / 25,916. Deaths.

06. Pennsylvania:

1,229,037. Cases. / 27,951. Deaths.

07: Georgia:

1,179,449. Cases / 21,951. Deaths.

08. Ohio

1,127,808 Cases / 20,492. Deaths.

10. New Jersey*.:

1,038,171. Cases. / 26,595. Deaths.

15. Massachusetts:

719,780. Cases. / 18,082. Deaths.

32. Connecticut:

354,335. Cases /8,293. Deaths.



COVID19: DOS AND DON'TS.

* **More than 4** Covid19 vaccines are available now nationwide in the US. Find out how to get yours.

More serious Delta and Delta Plus (Indian), Lambda and now Kappa variants are around & can create an another pandemic, so be careful & follow religiously the Guidelines given by the Medical Authorities of your country.

* Finally Vaccine is available all time in the US; India and many parts of world, many of us got both the doses, or single dose in case of Jhonson & Jhonson's vaccine. Yet post vaccination results/effects are not known to the research/medico community fully. We are still in a Pandemic Period, of Phase 2 and 3, also possible invasion of new 4 or more strains of UK, Brazil, South Africa, and now India Coronavirus.

* Entering the new wave of Delta and Delta Plus and three other virus variants, the number of cases are still on a higher side, yet to achieve the flat curve, world over most of us are just ignoring the pandemic do's & don'ts, particularly when we are with festivity mode in Summer days of 2021, so please take Extreme Care, Stay Safe & Stay Home. Yet not an easy time for everyone!

* Corona is still around, & may remain lifelong! It's not as simple as viral flu. It's as dangerous as like a contest of survival of the fittest.

* Vaccine is available now, first to the frontline medico fraternity, patients in need, & nursing home/long term care facilities residents on a priority, so be careful & protect yourself & your loved ones for good. Mask, frequent hand wash with soap & social distancing only is the option for now

* **Now Mask is not needed in the USA, if you are vaccinated.** But it is advised one must use Mask, even if you have taken Covid shots, Vaccine is just protection, it's not a cure! Also wear Gloves, Sunglasses & the most important: keep safe distance, keep washing your hands frequently with soap or use reliable sanitizer either one at least for 30 seconds.

* In India nasal steam (Naas) is recommended by the Government authorities, Ayurvedic practitioners, & also is a traditional remedy, but the US CDC and other Western Health Authorities doesn't recommend it due to a probable risk to the brain.

* If you can, use Mouth Rinse, twice a day, will help to boost your oral health.

* If you have young kids/minors attending the school or college, it's advised to put on the mask for everyone inside the home.

* We are passing through a tough time of Life & Death. Follow Social Distancing, but stay in for Social Contacts. If you know any one suffering with Corona, your nearer or dearer, call and talk to them frequently, we don't know whether they will return safely with us. Call other relatives/friends, at least ten persons a week. We are social & want to take care of those who are cut off due to Corona self-imposed lockdowns. Also keep busy yourself & family members with plenty of daily activities like yog, exercise & Stay Physically Fit, Pursue Your Hobby, Get Adequate, at least 6 to 8 hrs. of Sleep, & Eat Healthy Balance Diet.

* **Yet it's a long march to finish, no one knows when we will.....!!!!**

Take care, & Stay Safe.