



सत्यमेव जयते



Dear Ma'am/Sir,

As you must be aware, the World Health Organisation in May this year, owing to sustained decline in trajectory of COVID-19 and significant achievements gained over couple of years in achieving widespread Immunization coverage, withdrew the PHEIC status of Covid-19 pandemic

In India as well, due to consistent and collaborative actions between Centre and State Governments, we have been able to sustain the trajectory at sustainable low rates.

However, as the Covid-19 virus continues to circulate and its epidemiology behaviour gets settled with Indian whether conditions and circulation of other usual pathogens, it is of utmost importance that we maintain a state of constant vigil over the COVID situation, right up to the District levels.

Recently a few States/UTs like Kerala have reported a slight upsurge in COVID cases, however no new variant of the virus had been picked up, there are a number of actions that need State Government's focus. Few of these include:

- Considering the upcoming festive season, there is need to put in place requisite public health measures and other arrangements to minimize risk of increase in transmission of the disease by adherence to maintenance of respiratory hygiene.
- Ensure effective compliance of the detailed operational guidelines for revised surveillance strategy for Covid-19 as has been shared by the Union Ministry and Family Welfare.
(available at: <https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/OperationalGuidelinesforRevisedSurveillanceStrategyincontextofCOVID-19.pdf>).
- Ensure monitoring and reporting of District-wise Influenza-like Illness (ILI) & Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) cases in all health facilities on a regular basis including in the Integrated Health Information Platform (IHIP) portal, for detecting the early rising trend of cases.
- Ensure adequate testing in all the Districts as per Covid-19 testing guidelines and maintaining the recommended share of RT-PCR and Antigen tests.
- Ensure a higher number of RT-PCR tests and send the positive samples for genome sequencing to Indian SARS COV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) laboratories so as to enable timely detection of new variants, if any, in the country.
- Ensure active participation of all public and private health facilities too in the drill being conducted by this Ministry, to take stock of their preparedness and response capacities.
- Promote community awareness to seek their continued support in managing Covid-19, including adherence to respiratory hygiene.

- The JN.1 (BA.2.86.1.1) first cases have also been detected in India. The details are at Annexure.

I am sure that with our collective efforts, we will be able to keep the momentum going to effectively deal with challenges in public health.

With regards.

Yours sincerely,

Sudhansh Pant

(Sudhansh Pant)

Encl.: as above

Additional Chief Secretary/Principal Secretary/Secretary (Health) of all States/UTs

SARS CoV 2 : JN.1 variant

Lineage:

- JN.1 (BA.2.86.1.1), emerged in late 2023 is decedent of the BA.2.86 lineage (Pirola) of SARS CoV2.
- BA.2.86 lineage, first identified in August 2023, is phylogenetically distinct from the circulating SARS-CoV-2 Omicron XBB lineages, including EG.5.1 and HK.3.
- BA.2.86 carries more than 30 mutations in the spike (S) protein, indicating a high potential for immune evasion.
- JN.1 harbors S:L455S and three mutations in non-S proteins of SARS CoV 2.
- S:L455F may contribute to increased transmissibility and immune escape ability.
- JN.1 is currently considered a variant of interest (VOI) by WHO

Geographical distribution :

- JN.1 variant has been reported in USA, China, Singapore, India
- JN.1 constitutes a modest yet notable percentage, projected to potentially encompass 15-29% of circulating variants within the United States.
- Seven cases of JN.1 infection has been reported from China.
- More genetic sequencing data required to confirm its presence in other countries

National scenario:

- First JN.1 case has been detected in a sample taken from a 79-year-old woman with mild symptoms
- Earlier, a traveller from Tamil Nadu's Tiruchirapalli district has been detected with JN 1 sub-variant in Singapore

Symptoms:

- It is not currently known whether JN.1 infection produces different symptoms from other variants.
- In general, symptoms of COVID-19 tend to be similar across variants.

Severity:

- There is no indication of increased severity from JN.1
- At this time, there is no evidence that JN.1 presents an increased risk to public health relative to other currently circulating variants.

Laboratory test:

- Current laboratory tests (RT-PCR) is effective for JN.1 detection

Treatment :

- Existing treatment line for COVID-19 is expected to be effective against JN.1 infection

Prevention:

- Updated COVID-19 vaccines are expected to increase protection against JN.1, as they do for other variants.