



# Threat of 3rd wave of COVID-19: Are you armoured with 2nd shot of COVID-19 vaccine?

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The recent cases detected have found that the Delta variant caused more severe illness than previous variants in non-vaccinated people.

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The common side-effects of these vaccines include tenderness, pain, warmth, redness, itching, swelling or bruising where the injection is given.

**By Dr. Nitin K. Shah,**

India is sort of leading the world in the number of COVID-19 cases standing only second to the USA. As per WHO, the global number of cases in August 2021 crossed 200 million out of which India reported 32 million cases which is 16% of the total cases reported. Many countries like the USA, South Africa, Egypt, etc., are now going through the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic due to newer variants of the virus being found such as the Delta and Delta plus. The Delta variant has been found to be more infectious and has a higher transmissibility as compared to the original COVID-19 strain and some of the other variants.

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Most of the new cases identified recently are of the Delta variant which has a more deadly impact and thus vaccination is a must to protect ourselves from this deadly virus.

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As per the WHO, fully vaccinated people infected with the delta variant can spread the virus to others. But they appear to be infectious for a shorter period of time than non-vaccinated people infected with the variant. The only way the COVID-19 pandemic can be controlled is by each individual acting responsibly. It is essential to continue wearing your mask, avoid crowded spaces and unnecessary outdoor activity, wash your hands frequently and get fully vaccinated. To develop adequate immunity, the complete schedule of the vaccine must be followed as advised by the vaccine manufacturer. In most vaccines two doses are needed.

Currently, only 13.5% of the total population and approximately 22.5% of vaccine eligible population (> 18 years of age) in India is fully vaccinated (both doses) as compared to 23.5% globally. On an average as per CoWIN, India is vaccinating close to 6 to 8 million individuals every day. Due to low supply and delays in approving new vaccines, we have lagged behind in our vaccination drive. Earlier during the year, only two vaccines were granted emergency use authorization by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) in India. Currently, 6 vaccines have been authorized, of which 3 are in supply. Covishield® (AstraZeneca's vaccine manufactured by Serum Institute of India), Covaxin® (manufactured by Bharat Biotech Limited) and Sputnik V (distributed by Dr. Reddy's in India in partnership with the Russian Direct Investment Fund – RDIF).

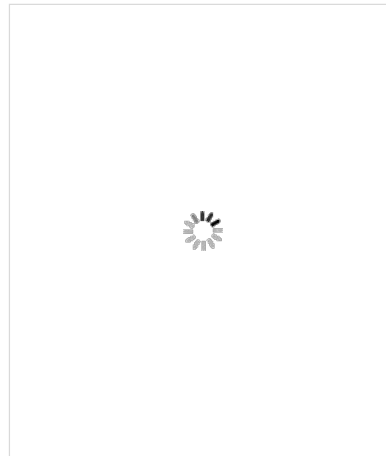
As per the Ministry of health, the two doses of Covishield are to be given 12 weeks apart and the two doses of Covaxin are to be given 4-6 weeks apart. The Sputnik V vaccine uses two varying serotypes- adenovirus 26 (Ad26) and adenovirus 5 (Ad5) which are given 21 days apart. This helps develop a strong immune response to the COVID-19 virus and Delta variants. Mixing of Covid-19 vaccine doses are to be avoided until enough scientific evidence on its effectiveness is gathered. One's immunity level after the first shot may not be very high. Therefore, one has to take both doses to ensure full efficacy of the vaccine and ensure strong protection against the virus. This applies also to those who have been infected with COVID-19 in the past as it is recommended that they too need to take both doses of the vaccine.

These vaccines are recently recommended for use during pregnancy as well as lactation though the uptake amongst pregnant women is low in India. Clinical trial results have shown a consistent strong protective effect and the vaccines have been subject to stringent checks, scientific and regulatory rigour as any other vaccine, and is proven to be safe.

These vaccines have been approved for restricted use in emergency situations in individuals over 18 years of age. They have been proven to be equally effective and safe in people above 60 years as it is in people of younger age (above 18 years). It is effective and safe even in people with comorbidities like diabetes and hypertension.

The recent cases detected have found that the Delta variant caused more severe illness than previous variants in non-vaccinated people. People infected with the Delta variant are more likely to be hospitalized than patients infected with Alpha or the original virus that causes COVID-19. Most cases of hospitalization and death caused by COVID-19 were found in non-vaccinated people. The Delta variant is extremely contagious and thus one must vaccinate themselves as soon as possible.

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The common side-effects of these vaccines include tenderness, pain, warmth, redness, itching, swelling or bruising where the injection is given. One may also experience Flu-like symptoms, such as high temperature, sore throat, runny nose, cough and chills. These side-effects are minor and subside within a few days. Don't let the fear of the side-effects prevent you from vaccinating yourself. There have been rumours circulating on the internet and on social media platforms that these new vaccines can affect fertility. These rumours have no medical grounds and have not been found during the trials. The adverse effects that may exist are considerably lower than those associated with COVID-19 infection, and are clearly outweighed by the benefits of the vaccine.

Vaccines help develop immunity against COVID-19 infection and help reduce the spread of the disease. Developing immunity through vaccination means there is a reduced risk of developing the illness, especially severe disease and its consequences. This immunity helps you fight the virus if exposed. It also helps protect people around you, because if you are protected from getting infected and from disease, you are less likely to infect someone else. This is particularly important to protect people at increased risk for severe illnesses. With the availability of additional vaccines in India, there would be greater access to vaccines reducing the wait for an appointment.

As we are witnessing a fall in the number of cases, restrictions have been relaxed. We have now started going back to work and stepping out for some fun-time with friends. Being a highly populated country, it is difficult to always maintain a safe distance from one another. Thus, enjoy our time outdoors without fear by making sure we are fully vaccinated besides following all the COVID-19 appropriate behavior. As responsible citizens let us all continue taking necessary precautions to prevent the spread of the infection. Wearing a mask, maintaining safe distance, hand hygiene and vaccination are the only way forward. Remember, vaccination is the only long-term solution to COVID-19 crisis, says Dr. Fauci from the USA. Vaccination against Covid-19 infection was the only "medicine", which, when taken, will allow businessmen and farmers to carry out their work, enabling growth of the economy, said Nirmala Sitharaman. She also said that it was the only way to prevent a third wave of the disease.

***(The author is MD, DCH, Section Head Pediatrics, P D Hinduja Hospital, Mumbai. The article is for informational purposes only. Please consult medical experts and health professionals before starting any therapy, medication and/or remedy. Views expressed are personal and do not reflect the official position or policy of the Financial Express Online.)***



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