

New Strain of COVID-19 – Interest or Concern!

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SARS-CoV-2 that causes COVID-19, has been spreading and changing globally since 2020. Detection of variants in many countries around the world are detected due to this changes. In the United States, India and in 11 other countries JN1 variant of Corona virus is recently detected. A surge in infections is raising alarm bells among health authorities due to hit of the variant. WHO declares this strain as variant of interest suggesting a potential emerging risk to global public health. The new variant is a descendant of BA.2.86, also known as 'Pirola' - which came from Omicron. There is only a single change in the spike protein between JN.1 and BA.2.86 which is a target of COVID vaccine. This variant is known to be more infectious and transmissible than Omicron but does not cause severe symptoms. Nausea and diarrhea are among the new symptoms. There is no increase in hospital admission or mortality due to this variant. However current vaccines are still protective as for Omicron. CDC experts assured that this subvariant creates no increased risk to public health but the rising concern is the aged people and those with multiple comorbid conditions as these people are more vulnerable. For preventing transmission and protecting vulnerable group WHO recommends same

prevention guideline, vaccination including booster as was for Omicron.

Preventing the spread of the virus is the best way to stop emergence of new variants. Thousands of scientists are with ongoing research around the world to better understand how effectiveness of the different COVID-19 vaccines are affected by new variants. Protection of COVID vaccines against infection and mild disease caused by JN1 strain are less than that was for earlier strains. Even then these vaccines are protective enough to make the symptoms mild if people are vaccinated. So continuing practice protective measure even after being up to date with the COVID-19 vaccine as recommended by country's health authority is important to prevent the spread of the newer strains.

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