

## **Amid Omicron scare, govt stresses on following Covid precautionary norms to avert surge in cases**

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With India having reported 25 cases of the Omicron coronavirus variant so far, the central government on Friday highlighted the need to follow all precautionary measures in order to prevent another surge in infections.

"WHO has highlighted that public health measures should be abided by on a continual basis, besides vaccination. Adequate precautions have to be followed. Laxity in public health measures is leading to a surge in cases in Europe," said Lav Agarwal, the joint secretary of the Union health ministry.

The statement came in the background of health officials also pointing out that people have started to ignore the guidelines and mask usage is coming down.

"As far as protection capability is concerned, we are now operating at a risky and unacceptable level. Mask usage is declining. We have to remember that both vaccines and masks are important. We should learn from the global situation," said VK Paul, member-health at NITI Aayog.

"We and the WHO have been warning that the time to ditch your masks has not arrived yet. We need to remember that we need to promote vaccination and at the same time, continue to follow all measures," he added.

Speaking about the vaccination coverage, the officials said that 86.2% of the country's adult population has received the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine, while 53.5% has been administered both doses.

The weekly positivity rate in 19 districts was between five and 10% and it was over 10% in eight districts of three states, they informed.

Further, they said that all the patients infected with the Omicron Covid variant are showing mild symptoms and account for 0.04% of the total variants detected.

Further, he said that only two countries had reported Omicron cases till 24 November, which has now risen to 59 countries.

"These 59 countries have reported 2,936 Omicron cases. Besides this, 78,054 probable cases were detected- their genome sequencing is underway," Agarwal said.