

# What NTAGI chief says on the risk of XE covid variant to India

Updated: 11 Apr 2022, 10:40 AM IST

- These variants will keep on occurring. Nothing to panic about as none of these are causing serious diseases or at the moment from Indian data it does not show a very rapid spread, said NK Arora, NTAGI chief.

The chief of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) NK Arora has said that the Covid-19 variant Omicron is giving rise to many new variants. It's of X series like XE and others.

"These variants will keep on occurring. Nothing to panic about as none of these are causing serious diseases or at the moment from Indian data it does not show a very rapid spread," said NK Arora, NTAGI chief to news agency ANI.

In an exclusive interview with ANI, Dr Arora said, " variants will keep coming but at the moment these aren't causing severe disease or increase in the number of cases."

"So, I would like to tell people that these variants will keep on occurring. There is nothing to panic about. Because there is none of the variants is causing severe disease at the moment as per the facts and figures are given by the Indian data. Second is that whether any of these patients or their contacts had more severe disease, that is also not true," he added.

On XE variant cases reported in Maharashtra and Gujarat Dr Arora said, "Currently whatever has been described from India XE variant, it is only by the first layer of testing. So, one is having less confidence whether it is XE or whether it is anything else in the initial XE variant which was described from one of the states. Subsequently, it was found that it is either XM or XJ, not XE. So, it just shows that these variants with just one test it's very difficult and particularly when new variants are coming."

Dr Arora further explained that three layers of testing are required and INSACOG is closely monitoring, "So, what is happening in India wherever XE has been reported after first testing, whether it is Gujarat or Maharashtra the local testing has not shown any undue increase in the number of cases in those areas are in the contacts of the people, where this virus was circulated. So, the first concern that if a new sub-variant of Omicron is described, whether it is growing more rapidly, we are very closely following and INSACOG have so far not found anything, which is of concern."

Meanwhile, the Indian Sars-CoV-2 Genomic Consortium (INSACOG) is keeping an eye on XE COVID variant cases in the country with a focus on hospitalisation and incidents of severity while stating that there is no reason to panic, sources said on Saturday.

"Unless this sequence is verified after isolating the virus, we will not be able to comment on it. We will have to wait to know whether it is different or not," sources told ANI.

A case of XE variant was detected in Gujarat, which was Confirmed by the Additional Chief Secretary of the Ministry of Health in Gujarat.

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"We are in touch with the Governments of Maharashtra and Gujarat. Biotechnology research centre found the mutation in the sample that's why genome sequencing is required after which the sample was sent to Kolkata where they have confirmed the sample as an XE variant. We have got confirmation," said Manoj Agarwal, IAS, Additional chief secretary, Health and Family Welfare, Government of Gujarat.

He further explained the person found positive for infection travelled from Maharashtra to Baroda in Gujarat.