

# Masks, Covid-appropriate behaviour likely to continue amid new Omicron Variants threat

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- **Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya met senior officials from the health department**
- **The ministry decided to continue masks, Covid-appropriate behaviour amid new Omicron variant**

The Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare Mansukh Mandaviya met senior health officials of the government on Tuesday as cases of the new sub-variant of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 are recorded from parts of India. The meeting concluded with the decision to continue masks and Covid-19 appropriate behaviour across the country, the news agency ANI informed.

Niti Aayog member VK Paul, Chairperson and members of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) NK Arora, and members of the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEGVAC) attended the meeting, according to official sources.

The meeting comes amid a 17.7% increase in the number of Covid-19 cases from Maharashtra, which include the cases of the new XBB sub-variant of the Omicron variant. The Kerala government also went on high alert after cases from the new sub-variant were reported from parts of the state.

The sub-variants XBB and XBB1 are said to be more contagious than the previous variants of the Covid-19 virus.

The recent spike in Covid-19 in Singapore is attributed mainly to the XBB sub-variant of the Omicron Covid variant. It is a recombinant lineage between two Omicron sublineages BJ.1 and BA.2.75 and is comparatively more contagious than any other variant of the virus. The Maharashtra health department even informed that the sub-variant has a growth advantage over BA.2.75 as well as evasive immune properties.

Aside from this, Maharashtra has reported cases from other sub-variants of Omicron, including the BA.2.3.20 and BQ.1 variants, which were discovered for the first time in India on Monday in a patient's blood sample in Pune.

The Maharashtra health department and experts have advised people not to ignore flu-like symptoms and to seek medical attention as soon as possible. They recommended following Covid-19 appropriate behavior in public places and getting vaccinated in accordance with government guidelines.

On Monday, Kerala health minister Veena George also held a high-level meeting and decided to intensify the preventive measures for Covid-19 in view of reports of cases of new genetic variations of the virus from the state.

"Necessary instructions have been given to all the districts. The new strain is more contagious than any other strain of Covid-19 so far. Hence the resistance is strengthened. About 1.8 percent of those infected may require hospital treatment. There is no cause for concern at present. But everyone

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should be careful. Everyone should wear a mask properly for self-protection. Masks must be worn by the elderly and those with co-morbidities. The minister requested that masks should be worn at the airport and in closed places," the Kerala health department had said.

With inputs from ANI.