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World Health Organization calls for vaccinated people to wear masks as global COVID-19 cases rise

The rate of new confirmed coronavirus cases globally, which has declined steadily since the end of April, largely as a result of the global vaccination drive against COVID-19, is again beginning to rise as the Delta variant continues to spread internationally.

Daily cases reached their most recent nadir on June 21, which had a 7-day average of 359,833 reported new infections of the coronavirus, according to Worldometer. Since then, cases have been rising, reaching 368,854 on June 26. Daily confirmed deaths worldwide caused by COVID-19 currently stand at just over 8,000, a figure which is expected to rise in the coming weeks following the rise in infections.

In total, there have been nearly 182 million known cases and more than 3.9 million recorded deaths caused by the pandemic.



A worker in protective suits takes a break amid graves at a newly opened cemetery for the victims of COVID-19 in Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia, Monday, Nov. 16, 2020. (AP Photo/Binsar Bakkara)

The dangers of the spread of the Delta variant were made clear on Friday by World Health Organization official Dr. Mariangela Simao who warned that, according to CNBC, “People cannot feel safe just because they had the two doses. They still need to protect themselves.”

Dr. Simao continued, “Vaccine alone won't stop community transmission. People need to continue to use masks consistently, be in ventilated spaces, hand hygiene... the physical distance, avoid crowding. This still continues to be extremely important, even if you're vaccinated when you have a community transmission ongoing.”

The World Health Organization's warning about the continued need for vaccinated people to wear masks constituted an unstated rebuke of the US Centers for Disease control, which last month encouraged unvaccinated people stop masking, leading to the abandonment of mask mandates throughout the country.

The current uptick in cases has been caused, from an epidemiological standpoint, by the fact that the Delta variant is 2.5 times as transmissible as the original variant of the disease, a result of the virus mutating and optimizing itself for human infection over the course of the past 18 months and hundreds of millions of cases. It was this variant that was responsible for the cataclysmic surge in cases and deaths in India this past March, April and May, when cases in that country soared to nearly 400,000 a day, at the time about half of the world's cases.

The Delta variant also causes four times as many serious cases and hospitalizations, a major factor in the surge in daily deaths in India in April and May, which peaked at more than 4,600, a third of daily deaths globally. And even that horrific figure is widely regarded as a vast undercount, especially in India's rural regions.

Similar instances of skyrocketed case counts are now underway in countries across the world. New cases in the United Kingdom have increased six-fold in the past two-and-a-half months to 13,900 a day, with the Delta variant now accounting for at least 90 percent

of all new cases in the country. In Russia, new cases have more than doubled since the beginning of June to more than 18,700, while new cases in Indonesia have more than tripled to 16,800 over that same period.

Cases in South Africa have increased 15-fold in April, standing at 14,800 cases per day. Equally dramatic spikes have occurred in Zambia, Namibia and, to a lesser extent, Tunisia. Numerous countries in Latin America have also seen their case counts double or triple over the past few months thanks to the Delta variant, including Colombia, Paraguay and Venezuela. This list also includes Trinidad and Tobago, a country which has had its number of total cases triple since April, and which was recently gifted a derisory 80 vials of coronavirus vaccine from the country's United States embassy.

That the virus has been allowed to mutate to become so dangerous, however, is the direct result of the homicidal policies of herd immunity promoted by the world's capitalist governments. In the United States, for example, where the Delta variant is on track to become the dominant variant by the end of June (July at the latest) and which has already suffered more than 619,000 deaths, states across the country are letting even the most basic protections, such as mask mandates, fall by the wayside.

Moreover, schools are slated to fully reopen in the fall, a measure championed by President Joe Biden and his administration and which will inevitably lead to an increase of community transmission across the country. Even now, outbreaks of the Delta variant, especially among the unvaccinated, have emerged in Missouri, a state with one of the nation's lowest vaccination rates.

The dangers of such policies was underscored on Friday by a *Wall Street Journal* report revealing that half of the adults infected in a recent outbreak of the Delta variant in Israel had been fully vaccinated with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. The outbreak raises the danger of both the fact that vaccines are not infallible when community transmission is allowed to continue, and the fact that the Delta variant is capable of, at least in some cases, breaching the protections provided by the vaccines.

In response to the resurgence of the pandemic, World Health Organization Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters at a press conference on Friday,

“Delta is the most transmissible of the variants identified so far, has been identified in at least 85 countries, and is spreading rapidly among unvaccinated populations.”

He continued, condemning the reduction of public health measures around the world, noting “It’s quite simple: more transmission, more variants. Less transmission, less variants. That makes it even more urgent that we use all the tools at our disposal to prevent transmission: the tailored and consistent use of public health and social measures, in combination with equitable vaccination.”

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