

WHY OMICRON SPREADS FASTER THAN DELTA VARIANT OF CORONAVIRUS EXPLAINED

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Health experts explain why the Omicron variant of coronavirus is highly infectious

The Omicron variant of the coronavirus is spreading faster than the Delta variant. It is also more transmissible than the previous variants. "There is now consistent evidence that [Omicron](#) is spreading significantly faster than the Delta variant," WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a news briefing in Geneva in December. The viral load is much higher in Omicron, which means that someone infected with the Omicron variant is more infectious than someone infected with the Delta variant.

Health experts explain why the Omicron variant of [coronavirus](#) is highly infectious.

"The Omicron variant is seven times more efficient in replicating in the upper airways than previous variants of the coronavirus. However, the Omicron variant tends to remain in the upper respiratory system rather than replicating in the lungs. That's what makes it tremendously contagious but also less severe than other variants, says Dr Harish Chafle, Senior Consultant - Pulmonology and Critical Care at Global Hospital, Parel, Mumbai.

Omicron has over 50 unique mutations which account for increased infectivity. "The SARS-CoV-2 has knobs called Spike protein on the outside that binds to the human ACE2 receptor and initiates infection. Omicron has over 50 unique mutations compared to the previous variant and 36 of these are on the spike protein. These mutations account for increased infectivity by increasing the affinity of the S protein to the ACE2 receptor, as well as increasing the efficiency of viral entry into the cell. This also accounts for the evasion of previous immunity that is being observed," says Dr Trupti Gilada, Consultant Physician in Infectious Disease, Masina Hospital, Mumbai.

Meanwhile, a total of 6,041 Omicron cases has been detected so far in India, showed the Union Health Ministry data updated at 8 am on Saturday.

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