



Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

## Why do new waves happen? Member (Health), NITI Aayog answers



### Focus on what is in our hands: don't give opportunities to the virus, don't become a susceptible host- Dr V K Paul

## “Decision to open schools has to be taken very cautiously”

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**Mumbai, 22 June 2021**

“There are countries where even the second wave has not occurred. If we do what is required and do not indulge in irresponsible behaviour, then outbreak should not occur. This is a simple epidemiological principle.” Dr. V.K. Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog was explaining the reasons behind emergence of new pandemic waves and how it can be controlled or even avoided by following COVID appropriate behaviours and taking measures such as vaccination. He was addressing the Union Health Ministry's media briefing on COVID-19, held at National Media Centre, PIB Delhi today.

### **Why do new waves happen**

Dr. Paul said that there are four elements leading to the formation of a new wave.

1. **Behaviour of the virus:** The virus has the capacity and ability to spread
2. **Susceptible host:** Virus keeps looking for susceptible hosts for it to survive. So, if we are not protected either via vaccination or by previous infection, then we are a susceptible host.
3. **Transmissibility:** The virus can become smart enough where it mutates and becomes more transmissible. The same virus which used to infect three hosts becomes capable of infecting 13! This factor is unpredictable. No one can pre-plan to fight such mutations. The change of the very nature of the virus and its transmissibility is an X factor and no one can predict when and where it may happen.
4. **Opportunity:** ‘Opportunities’, which we give to the virus to infect. If we sit and eat together, crowd, sit in closed areas without masks, then the virus gets more opportunities to spread.

### **A call to do what is in our hands**



**f** The NITI Aayog Member reminds us what is in our hands. "Out of the above four, two elements- Susceptibility and Opportunities for infection are totally under our control whereas the other two - Behaviour of the virus and Transmissibility, cannot be predicted or controlled. So, if we are protected and ensure we are not susceptible, then the virus will not be able to survive. We can control the susceptibility by wearing a mask or getting vaccinated. Hence if we decrease opportunities by following COVID Appropriate behaviour and decrease susceptibility to infection, then a third wave will not occur."

**t** Dr. Paul also called for collective efforts of the citizens as well as the system in order to stop another wave. "Some of these require individual efforts, while some others such as isolation of clusters, contact tracing, ensuring testing capacity and building awareness require the system to act."

### **in** "Decision to open schools has to be taken very cautiously"

Speaking about easing restrictions and reopening of schools, Dr. Paul said that the decision has to be taken cautiously and that we should take risks only when we are protected. "School is a crowd, a medium or large gathering, which gives opportunity for virus to infect. So, we should take that risk only when we are rather better protected, virus is suppressed and we are able to sit at a distance. But it is not easy to take this decision to open schools when an unpredictable situation is prevalent." He also mentioned that the virus is suppressed at present due to discipline and restrictions prevalent in many states, if we ease restrictions and open schools, then the virus gets opportunities to infect.

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