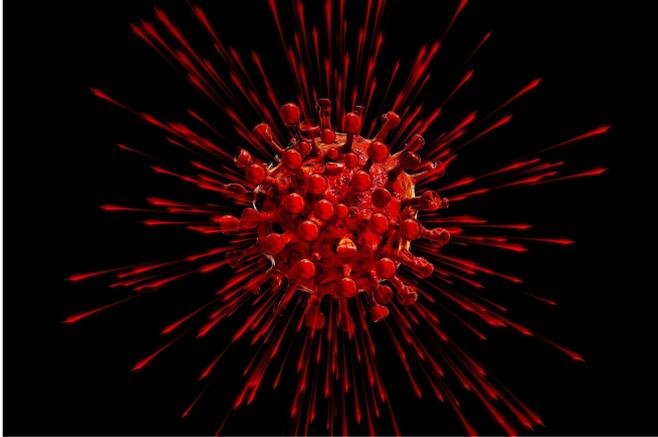


WHO warns of new COVID wave in Africa

6 May 2021



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The World Health Organization on Thursday warned of a new wave of COVID-19 infections in Africa due to delayed vaccine supplies, a slow rollout and new variants.

The African bureau of the UN agency said the continent had to catch up with the rest of the world in terms of vaccine rollouts.

"The delay in the delivery of vaccine doses from the Serum Institute of India earmarked for Africa, the delay in the deployment of vaccines and the emergence of new variants means that the risk of a new wave of infections remains very high in Africa," it said in a statement.

It added that new variants such as the ones that emerged in India and South Africa could unleash a "third wave" on the continent.

"The tragedy in India does not have to happen here in Africa, but we must all be on the highest possible alert," said regional WHO director Matshidiso Moeti.

"While we call for vaccine equity, Africa must also knuckle down and make the best of what we have.

"We must get all the doses we have into people's arms."

Some African countries had been exemplary in deploying vaccines, the WHO said, without naming them.

But it added that in spite of this, only just under "half of the 37 million doses received in Africa have been administered so far".

Africa now accounts for only one percent of vaccine doses administered globally, the WHO said—down from two percent a few weeks ago, as other regions' rollouts are progressing much faster.

The first vaccine deliveries to 41 African countries under the Covax scheme began in March but nine countries have so far administered only a quarter of the doses received, while 15 countries have used less than half of their allocations.

The vaccination rate in Africa is the world's lowest. Globally an average of 150 vaccine doses per 1,000 people have been administered, but in sub-Saharan Africa it is hardly eight doses per 1,000, according to the WHO.

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