

STATETIMES

SUNDAY

Your Companion for a Funday

What can you do to prevent catching COVID-19 after vaccination?



As the number of coronavirus cases go down slowly and more and more people getting vaccinated at least with a single jab of the COVID-19 vaccine shot, there's a certain level of reassurance about stepping out outside or carrying on with our activities and be a tad bit safer. However, even with the strongest protective odds offered by vaccines, not only is coronavirus an active threat but still a risk of catching COVID-19 despite being fully vaccinated.

Termed breakthrough infections, or the case wherein a person contracts or develops COVID-19 after vaccination is now a real problem across the world. While there are still not that common amongst those who have been vaccinated, the rise in cases especially in places with high precedence of Delta variant of the virus is a new cause of worry.

How common are they? And what do we know about them?

Experts have suggested that while breakthrough infections are 'uncommon', there can be a rise in reporting of such cases as we continue to witness higher vaccination numbers, and we'll only be able to gather more data on their severity and risks in the coming months, when we know how truly effective and protective vaccines are.

Now, while it has been certainly established that vaccines aren't a complete 100% preventive of COVID-19, the protection guaranteed by the vaccines leave people who do get breakthrough COVID-19 to only develop 'milder' infections and have less than average risk of being hospitalized or dying from COVID-19, which is why the pros of getting vaccinated weigh over catching the infection by being unvaccinated.

How can you avoid breakthrough cases?

Apart from this, while the medical community continues to study the occurrence of these rare infections, there are certain risk-factors, and measures that can expose someone to getting COVID-19, even after being fully vaccinated. For example, breakthrough infections could be more common amongst those at the frontlines (facing high exposure risks) or those with severe comorbidities (which could leave their immunity weaker and more susceptible to illness). Non-compliance of measures, too, can prove to be costly.

As we mitigate the risks of a potential third wave, we discuss some of the primary preventive measures and safety tips to lessen down the chances of breakthrough infections, if you have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19:

Continue using a mask for a foreseeable while

The rise in post-vaccination cases and the emergence of the Delta variant have brought along a stronger emphasis on the use of masks. While vaccines safeguard you from the severity of disease, good masking hygiene and diligence are some of the ways to actually prevent catching the infection in the first place. Masks should not be stopped, even if you have been fully vaccinated when you are outside since there's still a long way before vaccines reach everyone and no actual way to tell who is vaccinated, and who isn't. Hence, mask hygiene shall be needed to be maintained for a foreseeable future, till the time COVID-19 continues to be an active threat, and guidelines aren't lifted.

As for the type of mask you should be using, the most protective and infection-minimizing ones would be a well-fitted mask (three-layered cloth, surgical or N95) that covers your nose, mouth and under-the-chin area. The mask strings should fit snugly and not facilitate the entry of pathogens. If you use a mask, make sure you disinfect and swap them out frequently.

Pay attention to the place you visit and contagion history

In the post-vaccination world, it's important to pay attention to trivial details regarding the place you are planning to visit and the purpose of your visit. For example, some places might be relatively safer to visit than others, considering COVID-19 risk scenarios. Outside spaces, in comparison to indoor places, are deemed to be less contagious, and there's a lower risk of virus exposure there (since airborne particles cannot linger in empty, open spaces) for long. If you are meeting indoors, it's important to keep a tab on the risk of crowding, space and following of protocols (masks, distancing etc. if there's a mingling of vaccinated and unvaccinated people).

If you are travelling or going for longer distances, it's again relatively important to factor in the ease history and possible threat of the virus in a certain place before going there.

Wash hands and disinfect frequently

Something that has been emphasized since the pandemic first started to spread, disinfection is the strongest way to avoid the SARS-CoV-2 virus (and other contagious germs) from spreading infections. It's important to disinfect and wash hands after every time you have come in contact with someone, or accessed frequently touched surfaces. If you are outside, carry a sanitizer with you and clean your hands when you can.

Be wary of airborne transmission

Even if you have lower odds of catching the infection, do keep in mind that airborne coronavirus transmission is a big risk factor that can spread COVID-19, and transmit contagious respiratory particles to longer distances. Therefore, this is a risk to keep in mind and there's a strong need to avoid direct contact, and fuel the spread. If you are indoors, make sure the spaces are well-ventilated and there's no space for the virus to collect or linger. Adequate ventilation, good-fitted masks and avoiding crowding are some of the ways you can keep the risk at bay, especially if you do belong to a vulnerable group.

Weigh your risks, and choose a more suitable vaccine, if you have the option

As more vaccines become available to us and the pace of vaccination rises, it's important to note that different vaccines work to offer protection to a different degree, and some vaccines could be safer for use than others if you are at risk. Therefore, if you do have the option to pick and choose (if you are still yet to be vaccinated), do your research well and opt for a more protective vaccine.

Newer studies have also highlighted how different vaccines perform in cutting the risks of breakthrough infections as well. In the future, booster shots may also be made available for people at risk, or who may be immunocompromised.

Impact of stress on each zodiac sign

Everyone is prone to stress, but not everyone deals with it the same way. Some resort to different nerve-calming techniques like yoga and meditation, while others like to communicate their emotions and feelings. Similarly, the impact of stress on every individual can be different. Given that people have distinct, unique personalities, the effect of stress on each one of them and how they respond to it may also differ. That said, with the help of astrology, here's how stress impacts each zodiac sign.

Aries

Aries are courageous and confident and are born leaders. They are people with a strong and independent personality and they are not afraid to boast about it. They want to take charge and seize the days full speed ahead. They invite anxiety when they have over-committed themselves and when they feel that their energy started to dwindle and subside, they feel that they are letting themselves and others down, letting to the onset of stress. Also, known for being impatient of all, they also stress over not getting what they want instantly, leading them to being nervous, twitchy and nail biting, along with sleepless nights. Although they may feel like venting out this stress by punching a wall, they need to engage themselves in some physical activity like exercising or swimming along with taking a day off.

Taurus

Tauruses are very practical and responsible people. They know how to handle their lives and how to manage their budget. They are reliable and dependable people. They have a pretty strong work ethic and wants everything done perfectly the first time around. It's not so much the letting go as the accepting of the new that stresses them out. Their unwillingness to compromise makes them paranoid as they fear that any big change may lead them to fail, whether in personal or professional endeavours. They end up not only suffering from high blood pressure but also overindulgence in food, drink or sleeping. To combat this, they should utilise their energy into focussing on themselves, meditating and acceptance of failure as an opportunity to grow. Also, they should try to forgive those who wronged them as holding grudges will only trouble them.

Gemini

Geminis are the sharpest and the quickest wit people. They love exchanging ideas and they are so flexible. When they do something that always makes them feel better, they will start to feel as if they have some control of the situation and a different point of view can give them the perspective required to change things. Highly intelligent, restless and nimble they thrive on challenges in their professional and personal life. Geminis are stressed out when they literally have nothing to do. When they are stuck in a repetitious job or a dead-end relationship and they will literally come to a standstill and stop caring. Also, they have trouble when deciding. They need to reconnect with their family and friends, over a phone call perhaps and vent out their emotions. With their great communication skills, they will find themselves at ease and much more relaxed.

Cancer

Cancerians are highly emotional. They will stay loyal to people around them until the last breath. They also are determined and tenacious. They have a tender heart, and thus they feel all the feelings all the time. When they feel that someone has hurt them or have played with them, they become toxic individuals, being able to go very far with their acts and words. They get stressed by the possibility of losing someone close and think too much about hypothetical situations like what if this, what if that. They tend to build a wall around their true feelings to not get hurt or feel misunderstood by others. They need security and tends to let their emotions build inside these walls they put up causing a massive, messy ball of stress. When they feel overwhelmed, they crawl back into their cave and isolate themselves. This humungous amount of stress causes them in their nervous breakdowns, nightmares and sleep disorders. To combat it, they need to express themselves to people their problems as well as avoid letting someone be the source of their security. They need to step outside their house, change their environment and allow themselves some time away from their problems.



Leo

Leos are creative and passionate about whatever task they take up on. They are extreme and extravagant in not only in having a luxurious life, but also in their moods. Their day itinerary decides their actions-either too generous or too cruel. They enjoy being in the authoritative position and prefer to rule all. For them, not being in the spotlight causes immense stress. They at times lack the ability to go with the flow and accept the fact that they cannot control everyone. To get relieved from such stress, they need to learn to live in the moment and appreciate their life for what it is instead of trying to control every little aspect of it. They can also distress by inviting their friends and spending time with them, by either venting out their emotions or chatting over movie and dinner as this may be a distraction for them as they not only get to be the host but also be the centre of everyone's attention.

Virgo

Virgos are not only diligent and hardworking but also analytical and practical. They feel a great respect for others and identified with those who suffer in an unjustified way, making them to be known as a kind human being. Though they are the problem solvers for many around them, when it comes to their own case they cannot seem to find a clear solution for themselves. They bottle up all their worries and when they are unable to load off those worries, it causes them stress, affecting their physical health while trying to put a lid on their deteriorating mental health. They overload themselves with work and end up experiencing burn out. They should stop being so critical of themselves and rather do something that doesn't involve being a perfectionist like painting or gardening, helping them leave their anxieties and frustrations behind.

Libra

Libras are not only cooperative but also completely rational and fair minded with exuberant social skills. They are known for being calm, friendly, patient and unrestrained. One of the few things that stress them out is bullies. They absolutely hate it when they feel that they are being treated unfairly but hate confrontation even more. The stress of being treated this way only builds as a Libra racks their brain forever in trying to figure out whether they should confront the person who treated them this way or not. Also, when they are overwhelmed by life, they pretend that everything is great. Eventually, the stress of pretending is too much, and they have a meltdown. They should speak their mind at the time when they are feeling mistreated by someone instead of stressing about it later. They can also either

engage themselves in activities like music, meditation and exercise or meet up close friends for coffee for a rendezvous to alleviate stress.

Scorpio

Scorpios are not only the most passionate but also the most intense, mysterious and enigmatic of all the people. Be it their relationships, work, hobbies, they are passionate about everything. They are expert in hiding their true emotions behind a thick wall. This makes it hard for people around them to truly understand how sensitive they are. From this misunderstanding, it is easy for people to cross boundaries with them, which really stresses them out. They also feel like their privacy is being invaded upon, which causes even more stress for them. Also, as they are known for being jealous by nature, if anyone cheats on them or betray their confidence, their stress levels will rise. They lash out at friend and loved ones and they can become ruthless. This stress can lead to intestinal problems. It is crucial for them to make it known when they feel someone is testing their boundaries.

Sagittarius

Sagittarians, known for being generous, believe in living according to high standards. Though they have a good temperament, yet they tend to get nervous easily. A huge causation of stress for them is following a set of rules made by others. They are very independent beings and like to do things that don't make them feel constrained. They feel immense pressure when it comes to commitment or losing their freedom. Thus, it also ends up showing on them physically in the form of weight loss as well as hair loss. To combat this, they need to take out time for themselves and go outdoors for exploring new places or perhaps a long walk.

Capricorn

Capricorns are responsible and disciplined. They are ambitious as well as generous beings. They are tremendously proud. When they do not like or do not feel comfortable, they aloof themselves with others. They do not settle for less and demands a whole lot from themselves. They set seriously high expectations and expect to reach them all which causes a lot of stress. They tend to forget to relax when reaching these demands imposed on themselves. If they can't meet or exceed these expectations, it results in burnout and isolation. As a result, their whole body suffers the damage-they do not sleep or write, their ability to focus seems non-existent. It is necessary for them to halt and reconnect as immense pressure may also affect their heart.

Aquarius

Aquarius are considered one of the kindest beings who hate senseless discussions and raise their voices when it is not necessary. They are not only intuitive and empathetic but also very independent who have the capability to carve their own way and reach their goals. They do not like to dominate and are very positive, thus they are very good at listening to others. However, they can suffer from empathy overload and will avoid their own accumulating stress. They self-sabotage all the time because they do not believe in themselves, and this causes them all intense stress. They shut down and are incommunicative, keeping their feelings to themselves and when they feel having a breakdown, they close themselves. This leads to chest pains, dizziness along with panic attacks. To cope up with this stress, they need to slow down and halt themselves from rushing to achieve all their goals before time. They can go out and spend time in the woods in the form of hiking or maybe a picnic as nature in all its green and clean air will help them to heal.

Pisces

Pisces are people that are incredibly creative, and they always end up in artistic fields. Pisces are typically on the sensitive, intuitive, dreamy side and are a magical, mystical being, and one of the most sensitive people. They like their family in order, their friends in order, their romance in order, and when even the slightest little bit goes wrong, it sends them into spasms of stress. They are also not good at saying no and spend too much time pleasing people who are not friendship worthy. Pisces often believes that they don't know how to protect their privacy from intrusions. When they are feeling overwhelmed, they just want to curl up in a ball and never leave their bed, neither they answer the phone or respond to texts or messages. They tend to get messy and unkempt, and at times need intensive therapy.