# New Covid-19 variants fuel rising cases across India, Thailand and Indonesia



Recent weeks have witnessed a concerning resurgence of Covid-19 cases across several Asian countries, including India, Thailand, and Indonesia. This uptick in infections has prompted alarm over the potential emergence of new, more transmissible variants of the coronavirus. Health authorities in these regions are closely monitoring the situation while advising caution among the public.

In India, the health ministry has reported over 5,700 active Covid cases, with four new fatalities attributed to the virus in just 24 hours. While hospitalisation rates remain relatively low, officials are urging citizens to adhere to safety protocols. Health authorities emphasise the importance of wearing masks in crowded settings and getting tested promptly if symptoms arise.

Thailand has also experienced a spike in cases since early June. In just two days, the country recorded 28,300 new infections, predominantly within the Bangkok metropolitan area. Of particular concern is the increasing number of hospitalisations, with hundreds of patients requiring care. To date, at least 70 deaths have been documented in 2025. Despite the alarming numbers, health experts claim the current variants do not appear to be deadlier, as indicated by a death rate of 0.106 per 100,000 people.

Indonesia, similarly, is enhancing its Covid surveillance amidst rising infections. Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin stated that although cases are on the rise, they are largely attributed to variants that are less lethal. This sentiment mirrors the findings of the World Health Organization, which notes the continued prevalence of various Omicron subvariants, including LF.7 and NB.1.8.1, although they have yet to be classified as variants of concern.

Notably, virologist Lara Herrero from Griffith University has raised concerns about the potential transmissibility of the NB.1.8.1 subvariant, highlighting its strong binding ability to human cell receptors. Laboratory studies indicate that this variant could potentially spread more effectively than previous strains. Fatigue, sore throat, nasal congestion, and gastrointestinal discomfort are among the main symptoms linked to these new infections.

The World Health Organization asserts that existing vaccines should still offer protection against severe symptoms caused by these emerging variants, despite nearly 50 per cent of new infections in India being attributed to the older JN.1 strain. Nevertheless, vulnerable populations, including the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions, are advised to seek immediate medical care should they exhibit symptoms such as shortness of breath or significantly diminished oxygen levels.

The growing public health situation in Asia serves as a poignant reminder that while advances have been made in controlling the pandemic, vigilance remains paramount. Continued monitoring and adherence to public health guidelines are crucial as nations strive to navigate this evolving landscape of Covid-19 outbreaks.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/covid-surge-asia-variants-deaths-b2765651.html), [[6]](https://www.thehansindia.com/life-style/health/xbb116-variant-drives-global-surge-in-covid-cases-deaths-794358)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/covid-surge-asia-variants-deaths-b2765651.html), [[2]](https://www.who.int/news/item/2025/05/28/2025-05-28-1)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.thailandmedical.news/news/thailand-medical-authorities-report-more-than-a-100-percent-increase-in-weekly-covid-19-hospitalizations-new-xec-variant-suspected-as-culprit), [[4]](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/covid-19-epidemiological-update-edition-176), [[5]](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/covid-19-epidemiological-update-edition-177)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.who.int/news/item/2025/05/28/2025-05-28-1), [[5]](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/covid-19-epidemiological-update-edition-177)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.thehansindia.com/life-style/health/xbb116-variant-drives-global-surge-in-covid-cases-deaths-794358)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/covid-surge-asia-variants-deaths-b2765651.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.who.int/news/item/2025/05/28/2025-05-28-1> - The World Health Organization (WHO) reported a rise in COVID-19 cases due to the NB.1.8.1 variant, particularly in the eastern Mediterranean, Southeast Asia, and the western Pacific regions. This variant has been detected in U.S. states including California, Washington, Virginia, and New York. As of mid-May, NB.1.8.1 accounted for nearly 11% of sequenced global samples. Despite its spread, the WHO has classified it as a 'variant under monitoring' and considers the public health risk low, with existing vaccines expected to remain effective. Some regions have observed increases in hospitalizations, but the new variant does not appear to cause more severe illness compared to previous strains. The LP.8.1 variant remains the dominant strain in the U.S. and globally. [Source](https://www.who.int/news/item/2025/05/28/2025-05-28-1)
3. <https://www.thailandmedical.news/news/thailand-medical-authorities-report-more-than-a-100-percent-increase-in-weekly-covid-19-hospitalizations-new-xec-variant-suspected-as-culprit> - Thailand's medical authorities reported a significant surge in COVID-19 hospitalizations, with a total of 569 new cases for the week of August 25 to 31, 2024, averaging about 81 new hospitalizations per day. This represents more than a 100% increase compared to the previous week. The XEC variant, a recombinant of KS.1.1 (FLiRT) and KP.3.3 (FLuQE), is suspected to be behind the surge. The XEC variant has shown an unprecedented growth rate, making it a likely contender against the currently dominant DeFLuQE variants. [Source](https://www.thailandmedical.news/news/thailand-medical-authorities-report-more-than-a-100-percent-increase-in-weekly-covid-19-hospitalizations-new-xec-variant-suspected-as-culprit)
4. <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/covid-19-epidemiological-update-edition-176> - The World Health Organization's COVID-19 Epidemiological Update Edition 176, dated 13 February 2025, provides insights into the global situation. During the four-week reporting period from 9 December 2024 to 5 January 2025, weekly SARS-CoV-2 PCR test positivity changed from 8.5% to 8.1%. The WHO is monitoring several SARS-CoV-2 variants, including the variant of interest (VOI) JN.1, which accounted for 15.0% of sequences in week 1 of 2025. The variants under monitoring (VUMs), XEC and LP.8.1, continue to increase in prevalence, accounting for 44.8% and 4.7%, respectively, of sequences in week 1 of 2025. [Source](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/covid-19-epidemiological-update-edition-176)
5. <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/covid-19-epidemiological-update-edition-177> - The World Health Organization's COVID-19 Epidemiological Update Edition 177, dated 14 March 2025, highlights trends during the four-week reporting period from 6 January to 2 February 2025. Weekly SARS-CoV-2 PCR test positivity decreased from 7.3% to 5.0%. The WHO is monitoring several SARS-CoV-2 variants, including the variant of interest (VOI) JN.1, which accounted for 16.3% of sequences in week 5 of 2025. The most prevalent variant under monitoring (VUM), XEC, showed a decrease in prevalence, accounting for 42.7% of sequences. LP.8.1 and LB.1 are the only tracked variants currently growing in prevalence, accounting for 13.9% and 1.2%, respectively, of sequences in week 5 of 2025. [Source](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/covid-19-epidemiological-update-edition-177)
6. <https://www.thehansindia.com/life-style/health/xbb116-variant-drives-global-surge-in-covid-cases-deaths-794358> - The XBB.1.16 variant has been identified as a driver of a global surge in COVID-19 cases and deaths. The World Health Organization (WHO) upgraded XBB.1.16 to a 'variant of interest' (VOI) due to its 'sustained increase' and 'growth advantage' reported from several countries. Maria Van Kerkhove, technical lead for COVID-19 response at WHO, stated that XBB.1.16 has shown 'growth advantage and immune escape'. Although there has been a 'slight increase' in XBB.1.16-related hospitalizations in India and Indonesia, the levels are 'much lower than seen in previous variant waves'. The WHO added that available information does not suggest that XBB.1.16 has additional public health risk relative to XBB.1.5 and other currently circulating Omicron descendent lineages. [Source](https://www.thehansindia.com/life-style/health/xbb116-variant-drives-global-surge-in-covid-cases-deaths-794358)
7. <https://aseannow.com/topic/1331183-new-weekly-covid-hospitalizations-rocket-upward-to-3256-hitting-new-high-for-2023-2024/> - Thailand's Department of Disease Control reported 3,256 new COVID-19 hospitalizations for the week of 23 to 29 June 2024, averaging about 465 hospitalizations per day. Many private hospitals are reporting stress as ICU wards and COVID-19 beds are filling up rapidly. Hospitalized patients are taking longer to recover, leading to fewer beds being freed for others. The KP.3 and LB.1 variants are suspected to be behind the surge. [Source](https://aseannow.com/topic/1331183-new-weekly-covid-hospitalizations-rocket-upward-to-3256-hitting-new-high-for-2023-2024/)