

Africa and COVID: The world's least prepared continent experiencing an increase in cases linked to new Delta variant

The speed of the takeover of the [Delta COVID] variant, which was first identified in India and is forcing governments around the globe to tighten restrictions on social and economic activities, has shocked health experts in Africa, a continent that—in part thanks to its younger population—has recorded fewer Covid-19 deaths than other regions.

Some are warning that previous infection from another strain of the virus may not protect against Delta, leaving swaths of the population that were believed to be immune once again vulnerable.

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On a recent June night, every one of the 30 Covid-19 patients in the intensive-care unit of Uganda's largest hospital died as the oxygen supplies ran out. In Zambia's capital, Lusaka, doctors say the mortuaries have run out of space.

"We are in the grip of a devastating wave that by all indications seems like it will be worse than those that preceded it," South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said.

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Africa's third wave of infection comes at a perilous moment for the continent: Just [1.1% of its 1.3 billion people are fully vaccinated](#), medical supplies have been depleted, doctors are physically and mentally exhausted and, in some cases, unpaid and hospitals are turning patients away for lack of beds and oxygen.

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