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## Do you have superhuman immunity against Covid-19?

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here's a new term in town for people who have developed bulletproof immunity against Covid-19 — hybrid immunity.



Doctors say some previously-infected people who have taken the vaccine have developed ‘superhuman immunity’ against the virus due to natural and vaccine-generated immunity.

Dr Sundar Elayaperumal, a consultant microbiologist at Burjeel Hospital, said: “When the naturally-gained immunity against SARS-COV-2 combines with vaccine-generated immunity, a larger-than-expected immune response arises.”

A cross-section of doctors told Khaleej Times that the phenomenon of ‘hybrid immunity’ may be taking place among more UAE residents, going by the recent drop in Covid-19 cases across the country.

Dr Tholfkar Al Baaj, the chief clinical officer at Al-futtaim Health, said that individuals with a hybrid immune system response were in a ‘good position’ to fight the pandemic. “Studies show that the antibodies in such individuals’ blood can even neutralise SARS-COV-1, the first coronavirus, which emerged 20 years ago. That virus is very, very different from SARS-COV-2.”

He added, “Furthermore, there is a lot of research now focused on finding a pan-coronavirus vaccine that would protect against all future variants.” Based on these findings, it looks like the immune system is eventually going to have the edge over this virus, and if we’re lucky, SARS-COV-2 will eventually fall into that category of viruses that give us only a mild cold.”

According to Dr Mohammed Salman

Khan, general medicine at Aster Clinic in Qusais, a single dose of an Rna-based Covid-19 vaccine after natural infection of the virus provides superior immune protection as compared to double doses of vaccines in infection-naïve persons. “A report from the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) adds to growing laboratory evidence that

people who have had one bout of Covid-19, get a dramatic boost in virus-fighting immune cells — both B-cell and T-cell — and a bonus of broader protection against new mutants, including delta variants, when they are vaccinated,” said Dr Khan.

Has UAE achieved herd immunity?

Doctors have credited UAE’S robust vaccination campaign for the drop in Covid-19 numbers.

Dr Al Baaj said, “UAE has administered 18,942,543 doses of Covid vaccines so far. Assuming every person needs two doses, that’s enough to have vaccinated about 94.4 per cent of the country’s population.”

He added, “Herd immunity is usually achieved when at least 80 per cent of the population gets immune — either by getting infected with the virus or inoculated through vaccinations.”

Dr Khan said: “We can say we have nearly achieved herd immunity mostly because of the highest percentage of vaccinations administered in the world. More than 78 per cent of the UAE’S population is fully vaccinated, and almost 90 per cent has received one dose of the Covid vaccine.”

Concomitantly, the authorities have been engaged in periodically testing people for infection. “It has helped to identify asymptomatic cases. Subsequently, contact tracing, partial lockdown, and stringent rules have played a crucial role in bringing down the number of daily infections. Secondly, the UAE government has started administering booster doses and that has helped build mass and herd immunity,” said Dr Elayaperumal.

Vaccination rates among children

“The UAE has the highest vaccination rates among school-going children which has had a wonderful effect in increasing immunity among the population,” said Dr Hiba Waleed Kashmoola, a specialist in family medicine at Medcare Medical Centre, Sharjah.