

Thursday, Feb 22, 2024
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Flash mobs, community participation: Pune's 'People's campaign to halt Covid' to be launched on Oct 16

The campaign entails people owning up to their responsibilities to keep the city safe and break the chain of transmission of Covid-19.

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Pune | Updated: October 13, 2020 09:31 IST



Along the lines of the state government's campaign of 'My family, my responsibility', the Pune-specific campaign is devoted to keeping the city and her people safe. (Representational)

Holding flash mobs with adequate physical distancing and guiding PMPML bus drivers to stop commuters from boarding the bus if he/she does not wear a mask, these initiatives are part of a people's campaign that is being launched on October 16. The campaign entails people owning up to their responsibilities to keep the city safe and break the chain of transmission of Covid-19.

The task force on social action to control [Covid-19](#), set up recently, will focus on behavioural changes and appeal local residents to get actively involved in the [Pune](#) campaign.

Dr Subhash Salunkhe, who heads the task force, said the aim is to encourage community participation. "The downward trend of new infections is a positive sign but this needs to be sustained till the end of the month, when a significant plateauing of cases can be registered," he said.

Along the lines of the state government's campaign of 'My family, my responsibility', the Pune-specific campaign is devoted to keeping the city and her people safe.

Pune has registered a total of 3.6 lakh Covid-19 cases, of which 2.68 lakh patients have recovered. There are 31,282 active cases and till 3 pm on Monday, a total of 7,056 deaths have been reported due to the infection.

"We have tied up with more than 30-35 NGOs and have been actively working on how to get people to change their behaviour and ensure that they adhere to norms like wearing a mask, sanitising hands and maintaining social distance," said Dr Salunkhe.

Dr Abhay Shukla, a member of the task force and convenor of a public health subgroup, said they have worked out a decentralised approach to the issue.

"Women's groups, health groups, NGOs working in slums will be involved in encouraging community participation," said Dr Shukla

“We have to learn to live with Covid-19 and people need to understand this fact. This is a campaign that cuts across all classes. Be it Swachh workers, domestic workers, bank employees, vendors at the Gultekdi marketyard and others, all these messages will be communicated via various platforms,” said Poornima Chikarmane, another member of the task force.

Different groups should “own” this campaign which promotes the concept that it is our city and we need to be careful to break the chain of transmission, said Chikarmane. For instance, PMPML bus drivers, conductors and commuters must ensure that before boarding the bus, and after getting off it, they wear a mask and sanitise their hands.

While daily programmes have been chalked out from October 14, the campaign will be officially launched on October 16.

‘Best vaccine is behavioural change’

Dr Samiran Panda, head of the Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases division of the Indian Council of Medical Research, said the downward trend of new Covid-19 infections was encouraging.

“There are indications about a downward trend but we should also take lessons learnt from the Kerala experience, which saw a surge after Onam. With the festive season round the corner, a note of caution needs to be sounded. Vaccine studies are taking an interesting turn, However, presently the best vaccine is behavioural change and taking appropriate intervention measures to contain the spread of Covid-19,” said Dr Panda.