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 **The Indian EXPRESS**

Explained: Why the Centre has termed the country's Covid-19 situation 'optimistic'

The government has said the overall Covid-19 pandemic situation emerging in the country is optimistic. However, it has also warned against complacency.

Written by [Kaunain Sheriff M](#), Edited by Explained Desk | New Delhi | Updated: February 11, 2022 8:21:12 am



Covid care ward getting ready at Civil hospital in Sanand, Gujarat. (Express Photo by Nirmal Harindran)

India is in the middle of its third wave of the [coronavirus](#) pandemic, triggered by the highly infectious [Omicron](#) variant. The government said on Thursday that the overall [pandemic situation emerging in the country was optimistic](#). However, it also warned against complacency given the unique challenges the virus can still pose and the situation in some states and districts.

 **The Indian EXPRESS**

At home with Covid? 5 easy tips to help you breathe more easily

As a cardiorespiratory physiotherapist, I help people with heart and breathing problems manage and recover from a range of illnesses. Here are some simple exercises to help you navigate COVID at home.

By: [The Conversation](#) | Sydney | February 12, 2022 7:10:59 pm

Shortness of breath, persistent cough and fatigue are [common COVID signs and symptoms](#). And the vast majority of people will be managing their symptoms at home. As a cardiorespiratory physiotherapist, I help people with heart and breathing problems manage and recover from a range of illnesses. Here are some simple exercises to help you navigate COVID at home.

Why should I exercise when I have COVID?

Your body does need some rest when you are sick. However, doing simple...

Continued in page No.6

The good news

First, there has been a consistent decline in cases reported in the country. In fact, the daily number of new cases has remained under one lakh in the past four days. Second, there has also been a decline in the positivity rate—indicating the decreased spread of infections. Most significantly, in the past three days, the positivity rate has remained under five per cent, above which infections are considered to be a cause for concern. The health ministry has time and again asked for local containment and surveillance in districts reporting positivity rates above five per cent.

In the week ending February 9, a significant 433 districts reported positivity rates below five per cent. In the previous week, only 268 districts did so. This indicates a significant decrease in the spread of infections at the district level.

More importantly, only 141 districts are now reporting positivity rates above 10 per cent. In the previous week, as many as 297 districts were reporting positivity rates of over 10 per cent.

As many as 21 states are reporting fewer than 10,000 active cases daily, and 11 states are reporting active cases between 10,000 and 50,000. This shows a majority of states have fewer active cases—an indication that the health system is not overwhelmed by hospitalisation due to severe [Covid-19](#) disease.



Is there a link between disrupted gut bacteria and long Covid? Here's what a study says

"Bacteria in the gut is a protective mechanism, and in long Covid patients, prolonged antibiotic

therapy affects the microbial flora of the intestine," said Dr Ashit Bhagwati

By: [Lifestyle Desk](#) | New Delhi |
February 10, 2022 7:30:32 pm



Here's why your gut health is important (Source: Getty Images/Thinkstock)

Many people affected by [Covid-19](#) have reported symptoms of [long Covid](#) that include muscle weakness, fatigue, and [insomnia](#). The condition is also known as post-acute Covid syndrome (PACS).

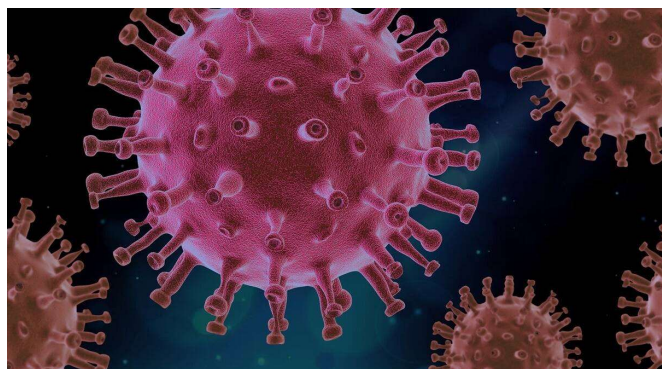
By now, it has been established that Covid is not only a respiratory infection; the virus also affects other organs in the body. Shedding more light on the same, a new study has now confirmed the role of [gut microbiome](#) on immunity and overall health, also adding that there may be a link between gut disruption or gut dysbiosis and long covid

Published in the journal *Gut*, the study by The Center for Gut Microbiota Research found what has been referred to as the "first evidence of gut dysbiosis in people with [long Covid](#) up to six months after their initial SARS-CoV-2 infection".

As part of the study, researchers conducted a prospective analysis of 106 patients with a spectrum of Covid-19 severity followed up from admission to six months and 68 non-Covid-19 controls. 'We analysed serial faecal microbiome of 258 samples using shotgun metagenomic sequencing, and correlated the results with persistent symptoms at six months,' the research noted.

The results indicated that at six months, 76 per cent of patients had PACS and the most common symptoms were fatigue, poor memory and [hair loss](#). "Gut microbiota composition at admission was associated with occurrence of PACS. Patients without PACS showed recovered gut microbiome profile at six months comparable to that of non-Covid-19 controls. [Gut microbiome](#) of patients with PACS were characterised by higher levels of Ruminococcus gnavus, Bacteroides vulgatus and lower levels of Faecalibacterium prausnitzii," it read.

The study noted that the findings provided observational evidence of compositional alterations of gut microbiome in patients with long-term complications of Covid-19. Further studies should investigate whether microbiota modulation can facilitate timely recovery from PACS.



How does gut health matter in Covid? (Source: Pixabay)

As Covid 19 remains a multisystem disease, experts note that it affects the gastrointestinal system. "Associations between [gut microbiota](#) composition, levels of cytokines, and inflammatory markers in patients with Covid-19 suggest that the gut microbiome is involved in the magnitude of covid severity — possibly via modulating host immune responses," said Dr Rakesh Rajpurohit MD, consultant pulmonologist, critical care medicine at Jain Multi Speciality Hospital, Mira Road.

Explaining further, Dr Ashit Bhagwati, honorary consultant, Internal Medicine and Honorary Academic Director ICU, Bhatia Hospital Mumbai mentioned that bacteria in the gut is a protective mechanism, and in long Covid patients, prolonged antibiotic therapy affects the microbial flora of the intestine.

"Overuse of antibiotics cause damage to the intestinal mucosal lining. To counter the damage, appropriate therapeutic treatment like probiotic, lactose-free diet is recommended to restore the gut flora, review the use of antibiotics to gut-friendly antibiotics as required so that stool binding becomes easier and healing takes place," said Dr Bhagwati.

Dr Rajpurohit further said that irrespective of antibiotic use, "the gut flora imbalance occurring after the disease resolution could contribute to persistent [symptoms](#) in patients".



Explained: Can you get long Covid after an infection with Omicron?

Long Covid-19 is usually diagnosed many weeks after a bout with COVID-19. Any long-lasting effects typically appear about 90 days after symptoms of the initial infection go away, Maria Van Kerkhove of the World Health Organization said this week.

By: [AP](#) |

Updated: February 10, 2022 7:48:05 am

Can you get long Covid after an infection with [omicron](#)?

It's too early to know for sure, but many doctors believe it's possible to have long-term effects from the omicron variant of the virus.

Long Covid is usually diagnosed many weeks after a bout with [Covid-19](#). Any long-lasting effects typically appear about 90 days after symptoms of the initial infection go away, Maria Van Kerkhove of the World Health Organization said this week.



A woman receives the Moderna vaccine during a COVID-19 vaccination at the Isabel Zendal Hospital in Madrid, Spain, Monday, Nov. 29, 2021. (AP)

Overall, some estimates suggest more than a third of Covid-19 survivors will develop some symptoms of long Covid. Symptoms include fatigue, brain fog, shortness of breath, anxiety and other problems. The lingering illness is more likely if you've been hospitalized with Covid-19, but research shows it can happen even after a mild infection.

Omicron began its race around the world late last year. The variant generally causes milder illness than the delta version of the [coronavirus](#), but has still overwhelmed hospitals.

Van Kerkhove said she hasn't seen any research indicating that the portion of Covid-19 survivors who get long Covid will change with the omicron variant.

Dr. Linda Geng of Stanford University, who co-directs one of the many clinics specializing in long Covid, said that though she can't say for sure, a new wave of patients is likely.

"We have to be very cautious and very careful and prepared," Geng said.

In the meantime, scientists are racing to figure out what's behind the mysterious condition. Some theories? It may be an autoimmune disorder. Tiny microclots may be causing the disabling symptoms. Or perhaps latent viruses in the body have been reactivated.

Scientists are also looking at whether vaccines could be part of the answer. A Yale University team is studying the possibility that vaccination might reduce long Covid symptoms. And two other studies offer early evidence that being vaccinated before getting Covid-19 could help prevent the lingering illness or at least reduce its severity.



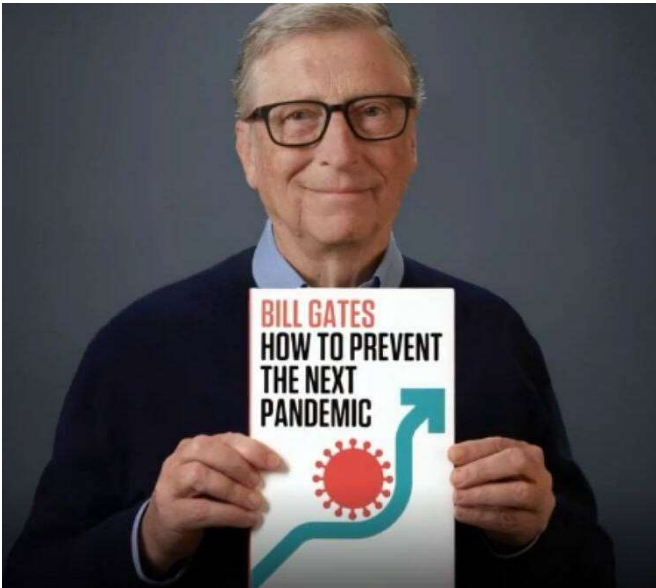
'How To Prevent The Next Pandemic': Bill Gates new book to hit stands on May 3

"I've learned a lot in the process both about this pandemic and how we stop the next one and I want to share what I've heard with people. So, I started writing a book about how we can make sure that no one suffers through a pandemic ever again," wrote Gates in his blogpost on Tuesday.

By: [PTI](#) | New Delhi |
February 10, 2022 10:55:27 am

After alerting the public to the threat of a future pandemic in his famous 2015 TED Talk, [Microsoft co-founder and billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates](#) now writes on making the [Covid-19](#) the last pandemic ever in his upcoming book "How To Prevent The Next Pandemic".

The book, to be published by Penguin Random House internationally and Knopf in the US, will release on May 3.



Microsoft co-founder and philanthropist Bill Gates with a copy of his new book. (Source: Bill Gates/Instagram)

"I've been following COVID since the early days of the outbreak, working with experts from inside and out of the Gates Foundation who are championing a more equitable response and have been fighting infectious diseases for decades.

"I've learned a lot in the process both about this pandemic and how we stop the next one and I want to share what I've heard with people. So, I started writing a book about how we can make sure that no one suffers through a pandemic ever again," wrote Gates in his blogpost on Tuesday.

Touted to be a [clear and hopeful plan of what countries, government leaders, and individuals must do](#) to help prevent another pandemic, the book, according to Gates, lays out the "specific steps we can take to not only stop future pandemics but, in the process, provide better health care for everyone around the world".

"... I outline the lessons we can learn from this pandemic, the innovations we need to save lives, and the new tools we need to stop pathogens early and equitably. I also tell you about my regular conversations with public

health leaders like Anthony Fauci and Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, my view of the vaccines that are stemming the tide, and what it's been like to become the subject of conspiracy theories," the 66-year-old author added.

His last book, "How to Avoid a Climate Disaster: The Solutions We Have and the Breakthroughs We Need", was released in February 2021.

The Indian EXPRESS

China approves use of Pfizer's COVID drug Paxlovid

Further study on the drug needed to be conducted and submitted to the authority, it said. It is not immediately clear if China is already in talks with Pfizer to procure the pill.

By: [Reuters](#) | Beijing |

Updated: February 12, 2022 2:47:42 pm



Workers in Freiburg, Germany, in November 2021 manufacturing Pfizer's new antiviral drug, Paxlovid. The drug came out of clinical trials last month with terrific initial results: 85 percent effectiveness if taken within five days of the onset of COVID-19 symptoms. (Pfizer via The New York Times)

China's medical products regulator said on Saturday it has given conditional approval for Pfizer's [COVID-19](#) drug Paxlovid, making it the first oral pill specifically developed to treat the disease cleared in the country.

The National Medical Products Administration said Paxlovid is approved to treat adults who have mild to moderate COVID-19 and high risk of progressing to a severe condition.

Further study on the drug needed to be conducted and submitted to the authority, it said. It is not immediately clear if China is already in talks with Pfizer to procure the pill. Pfizer did not reply to a Reuters request for comment. The approval is a boost to Pfizer which expects \$22 billion in 2022 sales of the treatment.

Pfizer executives have said the company is in active discussions with over 100 countries about Paxlovid, and has the capacity to provide 120 million courses if needed. While a number of vaccines are available worldwide to help prevent infection and serious illness, including one made by Pfizer, there are limited treatment options for people infected with COVID-19. Pfizer in December said final trial results showed its treatment reduced the chance of hospitalisation or death by 89% in COVID-19 patients at risk of severe illness given the treatment within three days of the onset of symptoms, and by 88% when given within five days of onset.

The United States is paying around \$530 for each course of Paxlovid and \$700 for each course of rival COVID-19 pill molnupiravir developed by Merck & Co. China has kept daily number of new COVID-19 patients with confirmed symptoms to below 250, and sometimes fewer than 10, in the past year

The number is small for its 1.4 billion population and by global standards, thanks to China's approach of quickly containing any local flare-ups as soon as possible and its weeks-long

quarantine requirement for most travellers arriving from abroad.

China has yet to approve any COVID-19 vaccines developed by foreign drugmakers but has vaccinated 87.1% of its entire population by Feb. 7 using several domestically developed shots

Continued from page no.1

At home with Covid? 5 easy tips to help you breathe more easily

..... gentle exercises while convalescing with COVID can help improve your symptoms. People who are older, overweight, or have a chronic condition, such as diabetes, or [cardiovascular](#) (heart/circulation) and respiratory (lung) disease, are more likely to have COVID symptoms.

So these groups are among those who would particularly benefit from simple, gentle exercise at home.

1. Relaxed breathing

This exercise is particularly useful if you feel short of breath:

*Get into a stable and comfortable position. Drop your shoulders and breathe in slowly

*Purse your lips (as if you're blowing through a straw)

*Breathe out slowly and steadily through your mouth

*Repeat the exercise for a minute.

You can perform this exercise as often as you like. But stop if you feel dizzy as taking too many breaths in a row will cause light headiness.

Perform the exercise in a room with windows open. If you are feeling hot, you can cool your face with a damp towel while doing it. Adopting a comfortable position is key to this exercise. Sitting in a supportive chair may be the easiest for most people. However, for some people with COVID, sitting in a chair is too strenuous. In these instances, try this exercise in other positions such as lying on your side, as recommended by the World Health Organisation.

2. Deep breathing

This can improve oxygen intake and calm your nerves:

- *Get into an upright position. Relax your shoulders

- *Breathe in deeply through your nose for two to three seconds. Hold your breath for three seconds, if able

- *Breathe out through your nose or mouth, whichever is more comfortable

- *Repeat the exercise for a minute.

Again, stop if you feel dizzy. You may cough and bring up some phlegm after this exercise. If you do have to cough, cover your mouth with a tissue and dispose of the tissue immediately in a sealed bag after each use. Wash your hands thoroughly after.

3. Lie on your tummy (if you can)

You may have heard from others, such as Harry Potter author JK Rowling, about the benefits of lying on your stomach (proning) during breathing exercises to improve oxygenation. Proning is common in hospital for people who

need extra oxygen. However, the evidence for proning at home is unclear and it is not for everyone.

As you need to stay on your stomach for at least 30 minutes, some people may find this extremely uncomfortable, especially if they have neck and lower back pain. For these people, sitting upright or lying on their side while doing breathing exercises may be better alternatives. Nonetheless, if you would like to try proning, here are some tips:

- *Do not try proning after a meal

- *Choose a firm surface to lie on. Soft beds can make lying on your stomach even more uncomfortable for your back

- *Turn your head to the side. Place a pillow under your stomach, feet, arms and head for comfort

- *Ensure you have someone with you at all times, especially when trying this for the first time. Both you and your helper should wear a mask to minimise cross-infection.

- *Do not attempt proning with children under one year old.

4. Move regularly

Even people with relatively mild COVID symptoms may continue to be fatigued after other symptoms have resolved.

Doing simple exercises regularly throughout the day while in isolation can help minimise the effects of reduced mobility during COVID.

You can try sitting on a chair and standing, then repeating that for a minute. Or you could march on the spot for two minutes.

Pacing and prioritising your activities to ensure you do regular activities throughout the day can also help manage your fatigue.

5. Know when to seek further medical attention

If you or a family member experience chest pain, difficulty breathing despite home management, dizziness, new weakness in your face, arm or leg, increased confusion, difficulty staying awake, or have thoughts of self-harm, you will need to seek urgent medical attention.

You can also use online symptom checkers for advice on your next immediate action, including when to call an ambulance. If your COVID symptoms last longer than two weeks, see your local doctor. They may be able to refer you to a pulmonary (lung) rehabilitation service or physiotherapist who specialises in lung conditions.



A pilot study suspects lung damage due to long-Covid; here's what experts have to say

Patients are coming with cough and bronchitis symptoms for up to a month to 6 weeks after the infection," said Dr Jayalaxmi TK, consultant pulmonologist at Apollo Hospitals, Navi Mumbai

By: [Lifestyle Desk](#) | New Delhi |
February 13, 2022 4:16:27 pm

A [long Covid](#) is when symptoms persist for months following the initial infection, the most common being breathlessness. And the investigations regarding the mechanisms driving breathlessness remain unclear, states a pilot study published on Oxford Biomedical Research Centre, titled *The Investigation of Pulmonary Abnormalities using Hyperpolarised Xenon Magnetic Resonance Imaging in Patients with Long-COVID*.



A pilot study suspects lung damage in long COVID patients; here's what experts have to say. (Photo: Getty Images/ Thinkstock)

The research included 11 non-hospitalised long-COVID (NHCL) and 12 post-hospitalised [Covid-19](#) (PHC) patients along with 13 healthy people who underwent Hyperpolarized Xenon Magnetic Resonance Imaging ([Hp-XeMRI](#)) along with lung function tests, 1-minute sit-to-stand test and breathlessness questionnaires.

The study found that there abnormalities in the RBC:TP or red blood cell to tissue plasma ratio in NHCL and PHC patients. It also stated that lower TLco was observed in NHLC patients as compared to PHC patients which "demonstrate significantly impaired gas transfer in non-hospitalised [long-COVID](#) patients when all other investigations are normal." The British Lung Foundation defines TLco as the gas transfer test that "measures how your lungs take up oxygen from the air you breathe."

The study further stated that these abnormalities are "present many months after the initial infection".

Dr Jayalaxmi TK, who is a consultant pulmonologist at Apollo Hospitals, Navi Mumbai, shared her opinion, stating, "We are seeing persistent lung involvement in the patients who had mild to moderate or severe infection following first and second wave. For the third wave, it is too early to say, but we are seeing persistent lung symptoms like cough and

breathing difficulties with wheezing and bronchitis-like symptoms.”

She further added, “After the first and second wave, lung involvement was common in long [COVID](#). CT scans were sometimes normal, but mostly showed resolving fibrosis or resolving pneumonia-like picture.”

She also said even though lung damage or pneumonia is not seen in the third wave, “patients are coming with cough and bronchitis-like symptoms for up to a month to 6 weeks after the infection.”

Dr Rohan R Naick, Consultant Pulmonologist, SPARSH Hospital, concurred, saying, “In the current study, a Hyperpolarized Xenon MRI scan was done, and the scans have shown that there is some impairment of gas exchange i.e the oxygen is not passing normally.”

He added that “these are very early findings and a larger study needs to be done to be sure about the implications of this.”

The Indian EXPRESS

Heavy on nostalgia, commercials explore a COVID-free future

The presence of digitally focused companies on a platform that has lost ground to streaming rivals and online outlets demonstrated the enduring appeal of the Super Bowl, where 30 seconds in front of some 100 million viewers cost as much as \$7 million this year.

By: [New York Times](#) |
February 14, 2022 2:32:53 pm



Cue Health, which makes an at-home COVID-19 test, tapped actress Gal Gadot to voice part of its upcoming inaugural Super Bowl spot. Hologic. (Representational)

Written by Tiffany Hsu

There was a sense of familiarity planned for the Super Bowl commercial breaks Sunday, as if nothing really had ever changed. Despite the pandemic, and multiple health protocols in place at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, the vast majority of game-time ads were expected to avoid [COVID-19](#).

Many of the ads for this year’s Super Bowl feature diverse casts, but with few explicit references to race even after several years of nationwide reflection on bias and discrimination ([Google’s](#) spot about recognizing different skin tones in photography was one exception).

Instead, classic Super Bowl tropes reign. A joint Doritos and Cheetos spot features musical animals. Uber Eats stuffed its ad with celebrities, including Gwyneth Paltrow, Trevor Noah, Nicholas Braun and Jennifer Coolidge. Companies aimed for laughs, though not always successfully.

There was at least one major distinction from past years: a surge of commercials from cryptocurrency exchanges aiming to persuade viewers to overlook the industry’s volatility and vulnerabilities. FTX, in its ad, tried and failed to convert Larry David to join up. Etoro pushed virtual currency trading as a chance to be part of a community, visualized as a crowd of people

floating in the sky, featuring a Dogecoin-referencing Shiba Inu dog and set, in a nod to crypto parlance, to “Fly Me to the Moon.”

The presence of digitally focused companies on a platform that has lost ground to streaming rivals and online outlets demonstrated the enduring appeal of the Super Bowl, where 30 seconds in front of some 100 million viewers cost as much as \$7 million this year.

“The myth that TV is dead is a little too eager in our opinion,” said Lule Demmissie, CEO of eToro US. “For us, it was about making sure that we are where those eyes are in the TV sphere, which is the Super Bowl, because it feels like a cultural moment.”

Here is what else was planned between gridiron plays.

A Return to Normal?

Travel, autos, entertainment and grooming companies are trying to persuade Super Bowl viewers to get pretty and get out — in pre-pandemic style.

There were movie trailers, such as one for “Jurassic World Dominion” at the start of the game (though there were several spots for streaming services as well). Gillette will return with its razors for the first time in 16 years. Online travel agencies such as Expedia and Booking.com hired charming actors such as Ewan McGregor and Idris Elba and are having them sell the fantasy of experience and escape.

Also, there will be cars, and many ways to buy them. Carvana, an online seller of used cars, is making its Super Bowl debut; its competitor, Vroom, will air a mini-musical.

Battery-powered vehicles will appear en masse. Kia has a robotic dog chasing after its EV6 crossover. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Salma Hayek Pinault portrayed the thunderbolt-

throwing Greek god Zeus and his wife, Hera, who retire to Palm Springs to zip around in an electric BMW iX.

Nissan will be promoting its electric Ariya crossover in a sendup of Hollywood action thrillers, featuring actors Eugene Levy, Brie Larson, Danai Gurira and Dave Bautista.

Crypto Companies and Betting Apps Showcased

Virtual currency companies have drawn much of the attention with their debut in the Super Bowl this year (that floating Coinbase QR code!), but several other categories had fresh entrants, too.

As states and sports leagues embrace sports betting, a surge of ads for betting apps has followed. The Super Bowl will showcase several commercials, including one from DraftKings involving a daredevil Lady Luck. Caesar’s Sportsbook filled its ad with actor JB Smoove as Julius Caesar, actress Halle Berry as Cleopatra and the Manning family of football stars as their dinner guests.

“The category is starting to play on a national level, whereas historically, based on the rollout of legalization, it was more of a local play,” said Jeremy Carey, the managing director of the sports marketing agency Optimum Sports. “Now they’ve gotten to a threshold where there’s efficiencies to be had on a national level.”

Commercials also pushed viewers to care for their bodies.

Cue Health, which makes an at-home COVID-19 test, tapped actress Gal Gadot to voice part of its upcoming inaugural Super Bowl spot. Hologic, in its first game-time ad in its 36-year history, asked singer Mary J. Blige to stress the importance of women keeping up with their health screenings.

“In the moment we’re in in time, health and wellness is absolutely more at the forefront of

everybody's mind-share," said Jane Mazur, Hologic's vice president of communications. "We're not a car, we're not a chip, we're not a beer, but we are bringing information to the audience that I think will resonate."

Real World or Virtual World?

Meta, the parent company of [Facebook](#), set its Super Bowl ad in the [metaverse](#). In the ad, an animatronic dog and its friend, a pink-tentacled monster, are separated in their physical reality but reunited via the company's Quest 2 virtual reality headsets.

Last week, Meta shares sank, partly because the company revealed that it spent \$10 billion building its vision of the metaverse, a next-generation internet of shared online environments and experiences, causing its profit to drop.

Software giant Salesforce tapped Matthew McConaughey to propose an alternative to the metaverse: supporting the real world. Titled "#TeamEarth," the company's second Super Bowl ad shows the actor drifting in a hot air balloon over the San Francisco Bay Area as he counters, without naming them, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk.

"While the others look to the metaverse and Mars, let's stay here and restore ours," McConaughey says.

Marc Benioff, who runs Salesforce, was deeply involved in the ad, said Sarah Franklin, the chief marketing officer.

"We have enough fluffy razzle-dazzle in the world — we need to get real and focus on saving the planet, helping our society, helping our communities and small business," she said. "The Super Bowl is an incredible stage to invest in because we have so much attention from people from all walks of life."

Miller Lite, which is blocked from the Super Bowl broadcast by the NFL's long-standing exclusivity deal with Anheuser-Busch, instead released its tongue-in-cheek game-time ad in the metaverse, creating an interactive digital tavern serving up virtual pool, virtual beer and realistic expectations.

"We're not taking ourselves too seriously with this," said Ari Weiss, the global chief officer of DDB Worldwide, the agency behind the Meta Lite Bar. "The metaverse is not going to save the world, or at least, not yet

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