COVID-19 Variants

New COVID-19 Variants
Viruses constantly mutate, so new variants are to be expected. Sometimes new variants appear and simply go away, while others stick around. We know that there are multiple COVID-19 variants in the United States and across the world at this time.

COVID-19 is a type of coronavirus, a large family of viruses. Scientists monitor changes in the virus, including changes to the spikes on the surface of the virus. This field of study is helping scientists understand how changes to the virus might affect how it spreads and how sick it makes people.

Some COVID-19 variants seem to spread more easily and quickly, which means they could make more people sick. At this time, there is no evidence that these variants make people sicker or directly lead to more deaths. Experts are concerned that if a lot of people become sick at once, hospitals could become overcrowded and our health care system could be strained. That could potentially lead to more deaths. To prevent that from happening, it’s very important for everyone to carefully practice all the recommended prevention measures, including:

- Wearing a mask
- Practicing social distancing
- Washing your hands frequently
- Limiting the number of people at gatherings
- Getting a vaccination when it becomes available to you
- Following quarantine and isolation recommendations if you are exposed to someone with COVID-19 or you become sick. **People who are contacts of variant cases will be required to complete a 14-day quarantine.**

Next steps
Scientists and public health officials continue studying these variants to learn more about how to control their spread. They want to understand whether the variants:

- Spread more easily from person to person
- Make people sicker or less sick
- Are detected by currently available viral tests
- Respond to medicines and vaccines currently being used to treat people for and protect people from COVID-19

Multiple COVID-19 variants are circulating globally

- **UK Variant B.1.1.7:** This variant has been found in multiple countries, including the United States.
- **South African Variant B.1.351:** This variant has been found in multiple countries, including the U.S.
- **Brazilian Variant P.1:** This variant has been found in multiple countries, including the U.S.
- **L452R Variant:** This variant is still considered under investigation by the CDC.

For more information on variants, [please visit the CDC.](https://www.cdc.gov)

February 12, 2021