

The UK Variant of COVID-19 Facts



The US discovered the first domestic case of the new COVID-19 UK variant (or B.1.1.7. variant) in Colorado at the end of December 2020. The rapid spread of this new variant was recognized in the UK in mid-December 2020. At that time, public health experts cautioned that the virus was likely already in the United States.

We are early in our efforts to understand this new variant and are sharing what we know at this time. What we know is based on the evidence we have now and may change as new data emerges.

- Preliminary studies suggest that the variant is **more infectious than other strains of COVID-19**.
- Patients with B.1.1.7. have similar symptoms to other strains of COVID-19. **The new variant does not appear to be more deadly** -- the risk of getting very sick or needing hospitalization is not higher if you are infected with the new virus compared to the old one.
- Scientists are confident that the **vaccines available in Colorado will be effective in providing immunity** against this new strain.
- If someone gets sick with the B.1.1.7. variant of COVID-19, **instead of infecting two or three other people, they might infect four or five others**. The more the virus spreads, the sooner our hospitals, nursing homes, and intensive care

units will get overwhelmed.

- **CDC's recommendations for slowing the spread**—wearing masks, staying at least 6 feet apart from others, avoiding crowds, ventilating indoor spaces, and washing hands often — will also prevent the spread of this variant.
- **Viruses constantly change through mutation**, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time.
- **Mutations can emerge and disappear quickly**. Some mutations can emerge that help a virus spread more easily, cause infection to be more or less severe, or lead to resistance to treatments or vaccines.
- **Multiple variants of the virus** that causes COVID-19 have been documented in the United States and globally during this pandemic.
- **Impact on diagnostic tests**: CDC, together with FDA, is evaluating diagnostic test performance against the variant. Diagnostic tests detect current infections with the virus. We expect that all currently available diagnostic tests will detect the variant.
- **CDC continues to track** the emergence of new variants and their potential impact on the pandemic.

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