

# KEY FACTS ABOUT COVID-19 VARIANTS



DELAWARE HEALTH  
AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
Division of Public Health

## Q. Is there a new variant of the COVID-19 virus?

There are several variants of COVID-19 that have emerged. A new variant was identified in the United Kingdom in September 2020, and it's now highly prevalent in London and southeast England. In South Africa, another variant emerged in October 2020, sharing some mutations with the variant detected in the United Kingdom. A third variant emerged in Brazil in early January 2021. This variant contains a set of additional mutations that may make it more difficult for antibodies to recognize it.

## Q. Are these variants circulating in the United States?

Since first being identified, the variants emerging from the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Brazil have been detected in numerous countries around the world, including the United States and Canada. Some variant viruses are of particular concern because they spread more easily, causing more severe disease, as they escape the body's immune response.

## Q. Are these variants more contagious?

Based on the information we have right now, these variants seem to spread more easily and quickly than previous strains, and they could increase the overall spread of the virus that causes COVID-19.

## Q. Do these variants cause more severe disease?

Currently, there is no evidence that these variants cause more severe illness or increased risk of death than previous strains. However, a higher rate of transmission could lead to more cases, which would increase the number of people who need clinical care.

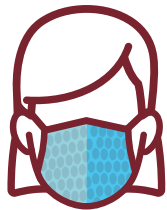
To learn more, visit [de.gov/coronavirus](https://de.gov/coronavirus), or call Delaware 2-1-1 or 1-800-560-3372. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing can text their ZIP code to 898-211.

## Q. Will vaccines be effective against these variants?

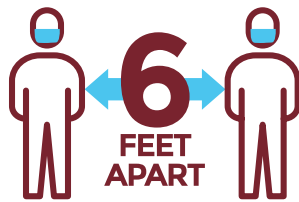
So far, studies suggest that antibodies generated through vaccination with currently authorized vaccines recognize these variants. This is being closely investigated, and more studies are underway.

## Q. What measures are necessary to prevent the spread of these new variants?

The most effective way to prevent the spread of this virus, no matter the strain, is to follow the guidance previously stressed by public health experts.



Wear a mask  
over your nose  
and mouth



Stay at least  
6 feet apart  
from others



Ventilate  
indoor spaces



Wash or sanitize  
your hands  
frequently

## Q. Are these new variant strains some kind of new supervirus?

No. Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time. Sometimes new variants emerge and disappear quickly. Other times, new variants emerge and start infecting people. Multiple variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 have been documented in the United States and globally during this pandemic.