

Live Well, Work Well

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What You Need To Know About the New Strain of COVID-19

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a new variant of COVID-19 has [been reported](#) in the United States. Referred to as B.1.1.7, this strain of the coronavirus was identified in the United Kingdom before it was detected in the United States.

Thus far, knowledge of this new COVID-19 strain is minimal, though health experts believe that the new strain of COVID-19 may be up to 50% more contagious than the more common strain. However, according to the CDC, there is not yet evidence that this variant causes more severe illness or an increased risk of death than the standard COVID-19 strain.

Health experts believe the COVID-19 vaccine should have similar efficacy on B.1.1.7 as the common COVID-19 strain, though there is limited knowledge on the topic.

Ongoing CDC Monitoring

In response to B.1.1.7 and other COVID-19 strains, the CDC has launched "National SARS-CoV-2 Strain Surveillance (NS3)," a program to increase the number and representativeness of viruses undergoing characterization. This program collects samples biweekly from states for sequencing and further characterization. Data from these efforts will continue to be analyzed at the CDC, which will communicate new information as it becomes available.

What This Means for You

As additional states report cases of this new COVID-19 variant, we do not yet know enough information as to how this might impact the pandemic or the distribution of vaccines.

To protect yourself and loved ones:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, and stay away from others when you feel under the weather.
- Practice social distancing, which means staying at least 6 feet away from others, when out in public.
- Wear a protective face covering or cloth mask when out in public.
- Avoid large gatherings, especially those that aren't socially distanced and don't require masks or face coverings.
- Wash your hands often using soap and warm water to protect against germs. If soap and water aren't available, use hand sanitizer.

For more information on the new strain, click [here](#).

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