



COVID-19

UPDATE

Getting vaccinated prevents severe illness, hospitalizations, and death. Unvaccinated people should get vaccinated and continue masking until they are fully vaccinated. With the Delta variant, this is more urgent than ever. CDC has updated [guidance for fully vaccinated people](#) based on new evidence on the Delta variant.

Understanding Variants

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Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur. Sometimes new variants emerge and disappear. Other times, new variants persist. Multiple variants of COVID-19 have emerged in the United States. At this point, the original variant that caused the initial COVID-19 cases in January 2020 is no longer circulating as newer variants have increased.

How Variants Work

If you think about a virus like a tree growing and branching out; each branch on the tree is slightly different than the others. By comparing the branches, scientists can label them according to the differences. These small differences, or variants, have been studied and identified since the beginning of the pandemic.

Some variations allow the virus to spread more easily or make it resistant to treatments or vaccines. Those variants must be monitored more carefully.

How Variants Change

As the virus spreads, it has new opportunities to change and may become more difficult to stop. These changes can be monitored by comparing differences in physical traits (such as resistance to treatment) or changes in genetic code (mutations) from one variant to another.

What We Are Doing

By studying each variant and understanding these differences, scientists can monitor, and often predict, whether a variant is more dangerous than others. Scientists can also use this information to track the spread of a variant.

Important Ways to Slow the Spread of COVID-19

- Get a [COVID-19 vaccine](#) as soon as you can. [Find a vaccine.](#)
- Wear a [mask that covers your nose and mouth](#) to help protect yourself and others.

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- Stay 6 feet apart from others who don't live with you.
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available.

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