

# Topic 10: virus strains



Date of Training

# agenda

- Introductions
- Virus Strains
  - Understanding and protecting yourself from variants
  - Communicating about variants
- Reflection & Next Steps

# Learning Objectives

- Describe one (1) **way that new virus strains develop.**
- Discuss **why the infection control actions recommended for COVID-19 work** for new strains of SARS-CoV-2, and why they are even more important.

# Introductions

- Your name
- Your role
- If anyone has ever asked you about virus variants

# POLL

Which of the following are examples of viruses with variant strains? Check all that apply.

- Influenza (flu) viruses
- Rhinoviruses
- Coronaviruses
- Enteroviruses

# Clarifying terms

You may hear different words used to describe new variants of SARS-CoV-2:

- Mutations
  - Variants
  - Strains
- **Mutation** describes the process through which the SARS-Cov-2 virus *changes*.
  - **Variants** describes the version of the virus that has changed, through mutation, from the original virus.
  - **Strains** is used in the same way as the word variants.

# Understanding and Protecting Yourself from Virus Strains

- As you watch the video, write down three interesting or important takeaways that stand out to you.



# Episode 19: What do new COVID Strains mean for Infection control?

## INSIDE INFECTION CONTROL

### WHAT DO NEW COVID-19 STRAINS MEAN FOR INFECTION CONTROL?

EPISODE 19





# Discussion

- What are the interesting or important takeaways you noted?



# Viruses regularly create new strains

- Viruses **regularly create new strains.**
- New strains are created when viruses make copies of themselves. When replicating, sometimes mistakes are made. Those **mistakes create a slightly different version of the virus – the variant.**

# Infection control actions work

**Infection control actions work, and they work against the new strains of SARS-CoV-2.** These include following recommendations for use of

- PPE
- Source control
- Physical distance
- Ventilation
- Hand hygiene

**Cleaning and disinfection**

# Sharing your knowledge

# Your Experience

- Who has had experience explaining the concept of strains to patients?



# Breakout groups

- In your groups:
  - Design a realistic 1- to 2-minute skit or role play addressing your scenario.
  - Assign roles (e.g., yourself, a patient, a coworker).
  - Practice your skit or role play.
- When we return, share your skit with the group.
- **Breakout Groups 1 & 2**  
**Scenario:** A patient asks: “I’ve heard that some of the new COVID-19 strains are more serious. Should I be concerned?”
- **Breakout Groups 3 & 4**  
**Scenario:** A coworker comments: “I may be vaccinated, but some of these new COVID-19 strains still seem scary. I’m worried we aren’t taking the appropriate precautions at work.”

# Presentation

- Share your skit!





# Frequently Asked Questions

Reference the FAQs to prepare to communicate about virus strains.

## VIRUS STRAINS

Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants, or strains, of a virus are expected to occur over time. The following frequently asked questions and answers can help you understand more about virus strains, including what they mean for infection control and whether you should be doing things differently for them.

### Q Are strains common with viruses?

A Viruses have new strains all the time. That's why there are different strains of influenza every year, and why you can get a cold more than once.

### Q How are strains created?


A Viruses have genes that carry instructions for making new copies of themselves. Every new copy contains those instructions as well. Sometimes mistakes are made during the copying process. When the instructions are copied wrong, the new viruses come out slightly different, with the mistake included in the instruction genes. Some mistakes make the virus not work anymore, so it's a dead end. When the new virus is still able to function even with the mistake, that's how a new strain is created, since all of the copies from that virus will carry that mistake.


### Q What about the new strains of SARS-CoV-2? Do they spread more easily?


A Researchers are working hard to understand how these new strains of SARS-CoV-2 are different. Some of the new strains of SARS-CoV-2 allow the virus to spread more easily or make it resistant to treatments or vaccines, so it is even more important to continue using the recommended infection control actions.


### Q What can we do to protect ourselves and our patients from the new strains?


A Even though new strains of SARS-CoV-2 are around, the basic pieces of the virus are still the same. This means that the recommended infection control actions for healthcare still work and are still needed to help stop the spread of COVID-19. This includes the following:


 **Using PPE.** An N95 respirator will prevent you from breathing in virus that's in respiratory droplets, and eye protection keeps respiratory droplets from landing on your eyes. Using gloves and gowns protects you and also keeps you from spreading germs into your work environment.

 **Source control.** Masking keeps respiratory droplets out of the air, so the germs in them can't spread to other people or the environment.

 **Physical distance.** Maintaining physical distance helps people avoid breathing in each other's respiratory droplets.

 **Cleaning your hands.** Soap and water and alcohol-based hand sanitizer break apart the envelope that holds the virus together, so it can't spread.

 **Ventilation.** Good indoor ventilation is important for clearing air that might have respiratory droplets in it.

 **Cleaning and disinfection.** Disinfecting products on the EPA's [list N](#) are known to kill SARS-CoV-2, including the new strains.



# Reflection: What did you learn today?

# Questions?

- Do you have any remaining questions about strains?



# REFLECTION: using your knowledge

- Our patients and their families may ask questions about new COVID-19 strains. What do you think is important for patients and families to know about virus strains?
- Write in the chat one action you could take to protect yourself and others.

# Resources and Future Training sessions

Project Firstline on CDC:

[https://www.cdc.gov/infection control/projectfirstline/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/infection%20control/projectfirstline/index.html)

Project Firstline on Facebook:



<https://www.facebook.com/CDCProjectFirstline/>



Twitter:

[https://twitter.com/CDC\\_Firstline](https://twitter.com/CDC_Firstline)



YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvrp9iOILTQZQGtDnSDGViKDdRtlc13VX>

To sign up for Project Firstline e-mails, click here:

[https://tools.cdc.gov/campaignproxyservice/subscriptions.aspx?topic\\_id=USCDC\\_2104](https://tools.cdc.gov/campaignproxyservice/subscriptions.aspx?topic_id=USCDC_2104)



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