



What are COVID-19 variants?

Viruses like COVID-19 go through changes, and these changed viruses are called variants. The COVID-19 virus will probably go through more changes and therefore have more variants. This is what many viruses do. The newest variant is called the Omicron variant. A previous variant is called the Delta variant.

Why are variants different?

Most variants are not significantly changed from the original version of the virus. Some variants of the COVID-19 virus have changed in ways that make it easier to get sick from the virus or to give it to someone else. That is the case with the Delta and Omicron variants of COVID-19, but not others. If you get sick with a variant, you could give the virus to many more people than the original COVID-19 virus. For example, someone with the Delta variant can infect 5-6 people, which is more people than before. For the Omicron variant, one person can infect many more than someone with Delta.

What are the symptoms of new variants?

The symptoms caused by the new variants are similar – fever, cough, body aches, loss of taste, loss of smell, shortness of breath, and diarrhea, among other symptoms. Omicron may also cause a scratchy throat, a dry cough, and sneezing as well.



Do these variants make you sicker?

We don't know for sure if variants make you sicker. But since it is easier to become sick, more people getting the virus means more people overall are getting sick.



What ages are the people who get sicker from COVID-19 variants?

Since variants can make more people get sick, there is a bigger chance of getting very sick if you:

- Did not get vaccinated or get a booster when eligible.
- Did get the vaccine, but your body did not build up strong protection against the virus.

If had COVID-19, do I still need to get the vaccine?

Yes. You can get COVID-19 again even if you've had it in the past. The vaccine gives you more consistent and stronger protection that you need to keep from getting very sick.



How Will Other Variants Affect Me?

Every time the virus goes through another change and makes a new variant, we want to know how it will affect us. We do not know what the symptoms will be, how sick we can get, or how easily we might get the virus until the doctors and scientists have time to study the new variants.

What Can I Do To Protect Myself From Other Variants?

It is important to remember that the vaccines for COVID-19 are still useful in protecting against the virus and its variants. The most important thing is to get vaccinated and a booster dose of the vaccine if you are eligible. You should keep on doing the same things that we know give us protection. Doing the following things can help to make it less likely that you will get the virus or get very sick.

- Get your vaccination.
- Avoid crowded indoor areas when you can.
- Wear your mask when you are indoors, and you do not know if everyone is vaccinated or if it is crowded.

