

# WHAT IS A COVID-19 VARIANT?

Viruses constantly mutate (or change) over time which create new variants (or strains). A new variant occurs because of changes in the virus' genetic blueprint or mutation. Variants may result in a virus that acts the same, or it can cause the virus to become weaker or stronger in its ability to transmit or cause disease. The virus that causes COVID-19 is called SARS-CoV-2. Multiple SARS-CoV-2 variants are circulating globally. There are now documented cases of these COVID-19 variants in the United States, (U.S.), including California.

## B.1.1.7 variant

- The B.1.1.7 variant was discovered in the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland). It is commonly called "the UK strain," but the official name is B.1.1.7. This variant was first detected in September 2020.
- There are documented B.1.1.7 variant cases in the U.S., including California.
- The B.1.1.7 variant spreads faster than the original SARS-CoV-2.

COVID-19 variants (B.1.1.7., P.1, and B.1.351) have been detected in the UK, U.S., South Africa, Brazil, and Japan and have quickly spread to over 30 countries. For many variants, we are still learning if they transmit more easily between people. The B.1.1.7 variant does transmit more efficiently between people. We are also learning if the variants cause more serious disease. Although still under investigation, Pfizer, Moderna, and Janssen COVID-19 vaccines are expected to be effective against these variants. The virus would have to mutate significantly for the vaccine not to work.

***Please consider getting the COVID-19 vaccine to protect our vulnerable community members and to help end the pandemic. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions or concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine. Please continue to wear face coverings in public, practice physical distancing, and avoid large gatherings to stop the spread of COVID-19 and its variants in our communities.***

The Moderna, Pfizer, and Janssen vaccines have mild and temporary side effects, including pain at the injection site, headache, fever, fatigue, chills, and muscle and joint pain. Individuals with severe allergic reactions to other vaccines should consult their doctor in case they may be allergic to a component of the vaccine. They should be observed for 30 minutes following injection rather than the usual 15 minutes. Individuals who carry an EpiPen for their allergies should bring it to their appointment. CDC notes that women who are pregnant or breastfeeding can be presented the option to vaccinate, but first talk to your health care practitioner if you have any concerns about whether you should receive it.

**#CovidVaccineSavesLives**  
**#EndThePandemic**

For more information, go to:  
<https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/>



California Rural Indian Health Board, Inc.  
COVID-19 Resources:  
<https://crihb.org/prevention-and-education/public-health/>