



MMWR and JAMA Updates: SARS-CoV-2 Variants

Today the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released two *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Reports (MMWRs)* highlighting the emergence of new forms of the virus—or variants—that cause COVID-19. Although COVID-19 cases have been decreasing, the emergence of these variants could reverse this progress, leading to more spread and more cases. Some of the new variants of SARS-CoV-2 may behave differently than the original and can spread more easily. Findings from these two reports outline how these SARS-CoV-2 variants present challenges both in the United States and internationally.

One report, "[First Identified Cases of SARS-CoV-2 Variant B.1.1.7 in Minnesota — December 2020–January 2021](#)", showed people in Minnesota with no recent travel to the United Kingdom (U.K.) were infected with the variant that emerged in the U.K. late last year, most of whom appeared to be infected during recent travel to other places.

Another report, "[Detection of B.1.351 SARS-CoV-2 Variant Strain — Zambia, December 2020](#)", found sharp increases in COVID-19 cases in Zambia that corresponded with an increase in infections with the variant that recently emerged in South Africa.

An [article published](#) in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reiterates that prevention strategies can limit the transmission of these variants. The article highlights that to reduce current community spread, everyone should wear a well-fitting mask; stay at least 6 feet away from people they don't live with; avoid crowds, gatherings, and poorly ventilated spaces; postpone travel; wash their hands often; and get vaccinated when it's available to them. In addition, public health authorities should work to identify and isolate people with COVID-19 quickly to prevent further spread.

The Emergency Risk Communication Branch in the Division of Emergency Operations, Center for Preparedness and Response is responsible for the management of all COCA Products.

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