

State Confirms B.1.617 Virus Variant in Iowa

May 4, 2021

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) has confirmed two cases of the COVID-19 variant, SARS-CoV-2 B.1.617 in Iowa. This variant is also referred to as the India variant because it was first detected there. We are still learning about the characteristics of this strain.

B.1.617 is not designated as a “variant of concern,” indicating that there is not currently evidence of increased transmissibility or more severe disease caused by this variant. However, we share this information as a matter of public interest given the virus impact and newly issued travel restrictions to India. The P.1 and B.1.1.7 variant strains which were previously confirmed by IDPH are considered “variants of concern.”

The cases were detected in an adult and an older adult in Jefferson County. IDPH and local public health have initiated contact with the individuals to understand exposures and initiate the public health monitoring process. The process includes notifying anyone with whom the individuals have been in close contact. As always, affected individuals are advised to isolate in accordance with IDPH and CDC guidance.

The case was identified by the State Hygienic Lab (SHL). SHL is doing sequencing to understand what strains are circulating here in Iowa and contribute to the understanding of COVID-19 activity in the United States. Routine analysis of genetic sequence data assisted in identifying the new variant strain in Iowa.

“Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is the best way to prevent this, or any other currently circulating strain of the virus from spreading through the population. Since the vaccine is now open to all Iowans over the age of 16, we have the opportunity to use this tool to protect ourselves, our loved ones and our communities,” said Dr. Caitlin Pedati, IDPH State Medical Director and Epidemiologist.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is tracking COVID-19 variants based on [here](#).

Iowans who have not been vaccinated should visit <https://vaccinate.iowa.gov/> to find a provider and schedule an appointment.

The emergence of new variants underscores that it remains critical for Iowans to continue the mitigation efforts that we know work to slow the spread of COVID-19:

- Get a COVID-19 vaccine
- Wear a mask or face covering
- Practice social distancing with those outside your household
- Clean your hands frequently with soap and water
- Stay home if you feel sick
- Get tested if you are exposed to, or have symptoms of COVID-19

- If you have been fully vaccinated for COVID-19, review CDC guidelines [here](#)