

HEALTHBREAK

OCTOBER 2021



The COVID-19 Delta Variant: What You Need to Know

Viruses are constantly changing, and as a virus infects more people, it replicates or makes copies of itself. Sometimes these copies are slightly different versions of the original, called **variants**. The more a virus spreads, the more likely new variants occur – and sometimes, the new variants can be stronger than the original virus.

Here's what you need to know about the COVID-19 Delta variant:

It's now the dominant strain in the United States. It's spreading faster and causing more infections than previous strains. Studies suggest that infected people are twice as likely to be hospitalized from the Delta variant than the previous variant.

It can occur and spread with mild or no symptoms. Symptoms appear 2-14 days after exposure and may include fever, headache, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath, fatigue, and muscle or body aches. Loss of taste and cough is less common with the Delta variant than with previous strains.

The most important thing you can do to protect yourself and others is to get fully vaccinated – that means getting both doses of two-dose vaccines, such as Pfizer or Moderna, or one dose of a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson. If people do not get vaccinated, strains of the virus will continue to mutate and lead to more severe illnesses and deaths.

Fully vaccinated people can still become infected with and spread the Delta variant to others. According to the Centers for Disease Control, while the COVID-19 vaccines effectively prevent severe disease and death, vaccinated people can still become infected with the Delta variant. However, vaccinated people appear to be infectious for less time than those who are not vaccinated.

As with the previous variant, you can help slow the spread by getting vaccinated, continuing to wear a face mask, practicing social distancing, and washing your hands.

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